

CRAFTED LODGING

GREAT LAKES BY DESIGN

Brickyard

A new Chicago residence designed by dSPACE Studio nestles harmoniously into its neighborhood, balancing private family living and urban dwelling

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Pop Art coastal

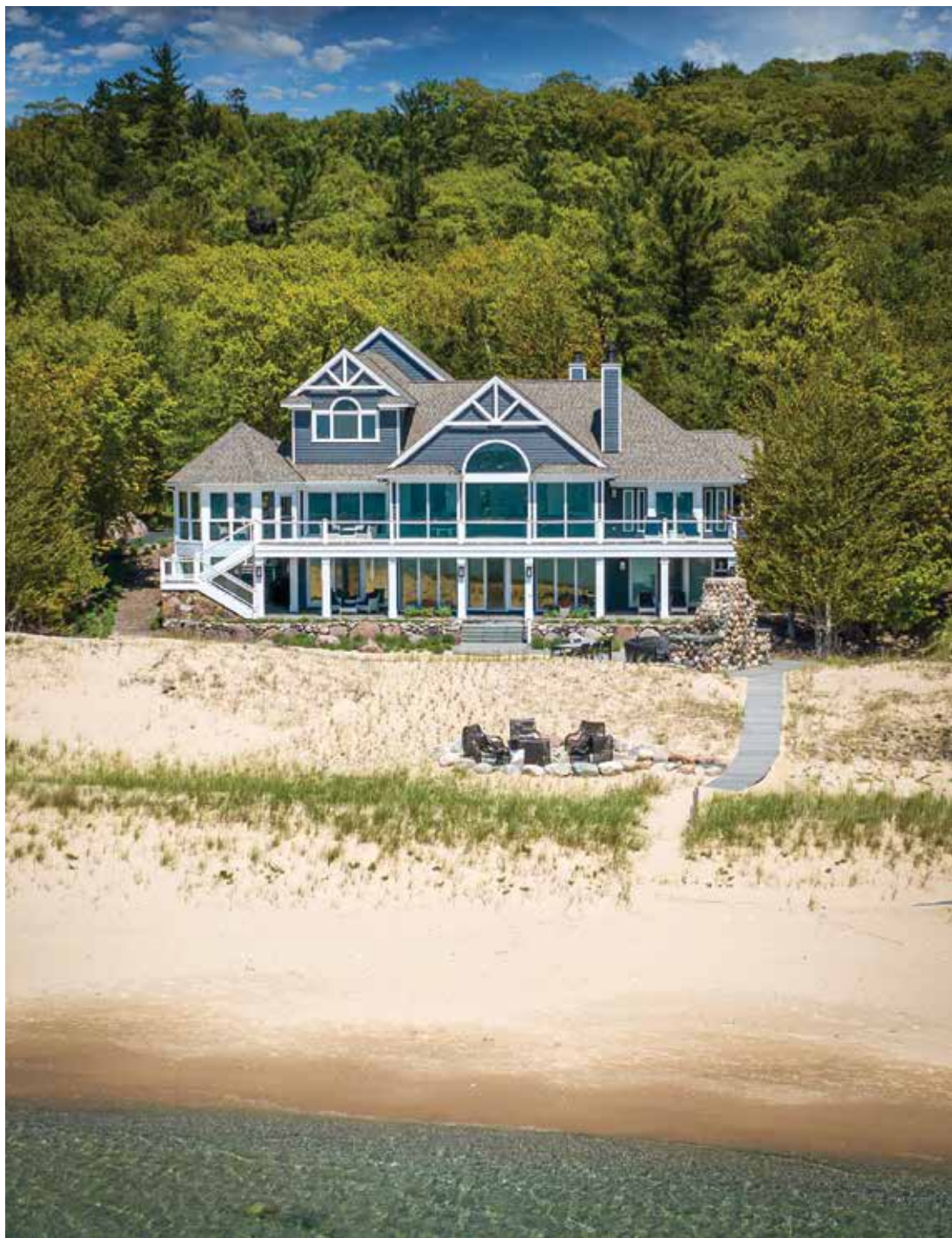
Text: R.J. Weick

Tucked into the natural shoreline in Harbor Springs, Michigan, amid a freshwater theater of nearshore waters and coastal forests, this transitional beach home is an inspired reinvention of its former self, where the tranquility of lake, sand, and sky serve as both the calm backdrop and the bright new canvas for the client's bold pop art collection. Inspired by the California-coastal style, this renovation realized by the collaborative team of Jones-Keena & Co. of Birmingham, Michigan, O'Brien Harris LLC of Chicago, Grand Rapids, and Petoskey, and White & Liebler Architects of Petoskey, Michigan, purposefully reimagines defined interior spaces, architectural details, exterior landscaping, and overall palette composition.

Originally featuring deep rich, wood tones of walnut, teak, and holly and more traditional elements often found within the northern Michigan context, this project took on the complete renovation of the house to capture the clients' vision of a bright, comfortable, and casual beach home. Throughout the process, the renovation also comprised a small addition, expanding functional square footage of the home to roughly 5,000 square feet with five bedrooms and seven-and-a-half bathrooms across its two-level footprint. With its intentional landscaping integrating native plants and grasses to the site and reestablished connection to its existing outdoor stone fireplace located near the water, the project redefines the home's presence on the site as a holistic experience within nature.

Nicole Withers, ASID, principal of Jones-Keena & Co., said the project also reunited longtime clients of the firm with design team professionals Lucy Earl, founder and principal, and Rachel Hartung, lead designer of the project, which was part of what was so fun about the process. The clients, who have previously worked with Jones-Keena & Co. on a couple of other projects, had been in the Harbor Springs-Petoskey area for a long time and when this house came up on the market, they saw the potential—open floor plan, expansive lakeside deck—for transforming it into their dream beach house.

"Some clients like to have the same house in different locations, but these clients are really fun because each of their houses is totally differ-





ent. There is definitely something [about them] that when you walk through each house, you can see why they are attracted to it. They are definitely attracted to clean lines, but the first house we did for them was completely different. It was darkened wood, a little bit more of a reflection of him and this house—like we don't have floral prints anywhere, so I feel like there is a masculinity about it—because it is so light, I feel like it is equally masculine and feminine because of the color scheme,” Withers said.

“There is something so awesome about having a familiarity with someone already so you can jump-start a project. The clients, over the years, have fine-tuned their art style, which they love pop art, so that became a central theme in the house and just having beautiful unique backgrounds. They like to have things that are different and cutting-edge,” Withers added.

Jones-Keena & Co. is an award-winning, nationally recognized interior design firm that takes a personalized approach to the design process as they guide clients to develop their own style to ultimately live a bigger, more beautiful life. Founded in 1991, Jones-Keena & Co. works in residential and commercial spaces, specializing in projects from the ground up. Led by the mother-daughter team of Lucy Earl and Nicole Withers, the full-service firm collaborates with architects, builders, vendors, and trades throughout the process to deliver classic, timeless interiors that stand the test of time regardless of style. Jones-Keena & Co. offers design services like interior design, interior architecture, builder specifications, and space planning, as well as custom furniture, custom upholstery, and furniture fabrication.

“When people come home, they are proud of their environment, they absolutely love it. The space reflects them and not someone on my design team. We really pride ourselves on getting to know our clients and really helping them to focus in on their personal style, because I feel like that is part of your job as an interior designer. It is not just showing people what is cool, but helping them develop a personal style, if you will,” Withers said.

“I love being with people and I love getting to the nitty gritty of what really makes people tick and I feel like humans are attracted to beautiful, organized spaces and it is fun to be able to help people realize their dreams,” Withers added.

For this coastal beach home, the challenge was to adapt the existing architectural structure to support the clients' own lifestyle and programmatic needs, a journey reminiscent of their own design style evolution and art collection curation fine-tuned over the years. Withers noted though the home had initially been built in the '80s or '90s—and since undergone a previous renovation—the remodel was more about





the fact that the home didn't have a lot of great architectural detail more than the spaces were compartmentalized or laid out in a more formal sequence of spaces.

"We put an addition on the house, but not in the main living spaces. The addition was an extra guest bedroom and a bath, a huge exercise room over the garage and a bunk room, so we just added more functional square footage and on the first floor, we left the footprint. We changed the windows and the doors, and a new window in the kitchen over the sink, but the spaces were pretty much the same," Withers said.

"We added a bar buffet area at the bottom of the stairs and we opened up the stair railing to make that space feel so much more open, but we technically didn't take down big walls. We changed trim details, because it had a lot of wood trim. We changed a lot of fireplace details—we took off the big wood over-mantel—and added all the nickel board every-





where, which I think gave the whole first floor a beachy feel and added the light oak floors. Plus, we added the beams in the ceiling and added the light-stained oak on the ceiling to give it a beachy California feel,” Withers added.

To help realize the redesign, the clients also looked to White & Liebler Architects, a firm with nearly 45 years of experience providing high-quality residential and resort architectural services, and O’Brien Harris, a manufacturer of bespoke cabinetry and design services company in the residential and commercial spaces. Laura O’Brien, owner of O’Brien Harris, noted a lot of the houses built around this home were constructed roughly 30 years ago when the aesthetic was a bit different and the materials often reflected that.

“This particular project started with the homeowners wanting an update, clearly a fantastic property on the lake, and really wanting to take this house to a really classic, coastal feel. I think a lot of the spaces were already defined—kitchen and things like that—so our role was really just reimagining the space in this classic, coastal style,” O’Brien said. “Jones-Keena led the charge a lot of the time on the direction. We were really here to help take this house into more of a current day vibe.”

Founded by Laura O’Brien, O’Brien Harris brings together ideals of uncompromising American craftsmanship and timeless British sensibility, melding the rich furniture heritage of Great Britain and America. The company, which manufactures handmade bespoke cabinetry for interior spaces from its workshop in the historical Furniture City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, specializes in the curation of space in kitchens, baths, libraries, and butler’s pantries that ultimately transform their clients’ lives.

It has become renowned as a design partner in the interior space as the team guides their clients’ visions into carefully unified expressions of bespoke, fine-fitted furniture, artisanal craftsmanship, pure lines, and tailored sophistication. The company’s ability to manufacture, craft, and deliver heirloom furniture informed by a dedication to heritage, skill, and materiality, has also defined its portfolio and history. For O’Brien, a well-organized, well-edited, and well-curated space impacts those who engage or interact with it on a visual, functional, and emotive level, and in spaces, particularly like the kitchen, the challenge is creating beauty amid function—and the often chaos that accompanies the rhythm and flow of life.

“I think the before and the after really tells the story. Taking an existing home in a beautiful setting that potentially didn’t have the view and the modern appeal, the transformative nature of this is maybe the most interesting thing about it. I’ve always said renovation projects are my most favorite, because, like in this case, there was a family living here for years in the previous incarnation and they







were okay with it since it met their specific needs at the time,” O’Brien said.

“They didn’t think to do some of the things that we thought to do in this project to really open it up, that is the most impact that we had on the project, really making it feel as if it were purposefully built this way. If you walk in here now, you don’t feel like it was a renovation, you feel like it was all intended,” O’Brien added.

The O’Brien Harris team lent their expertise in curation in some of the rooms throughout the home, such as the kitchen, primary bath, guest suite, and lower-level bar, among others. Amy Dixon, master draftsman who

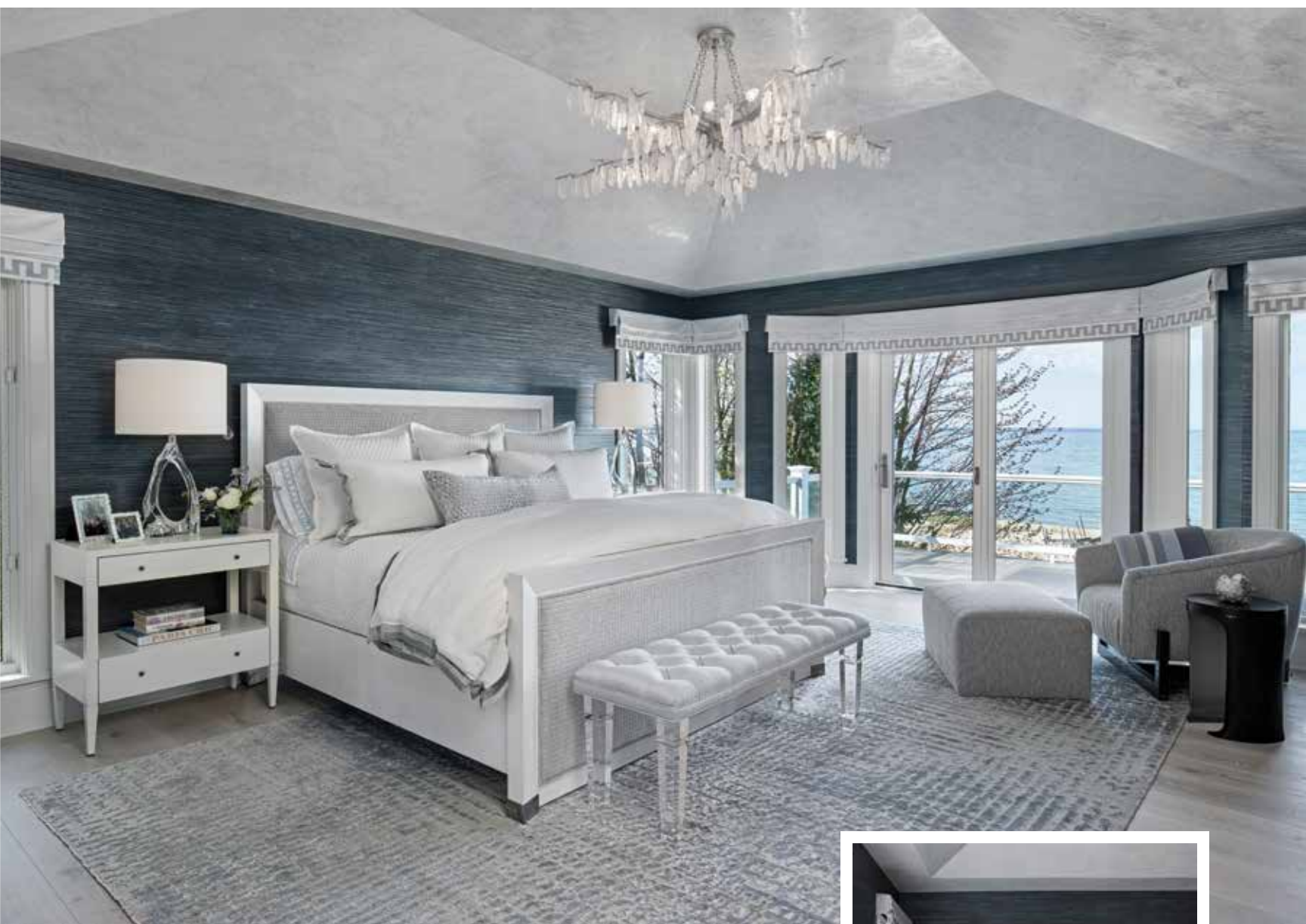
serves an instrumental role at O’Brien Harris and whose keen eye for detail and proportion informs every rendered line, said one of the changes in the kitchen that helped open up the space was removing a large, custom-curved bar and opening up the base of the stair to create a pass-through area.

“That clever pass-through into the stairway, no one would ever imagine that would have been closed off. It all makes sense architecturally and while we are designing the rooms like the kitchens and the bathrooms, we are very involved in the space planning of how things are going to flow, because we

know that the kitchen is so integral to all of the other spaces,” O’Brien said.

“I think anytime you are in a renovation situation, you are trying to take a problem and turn it into a solution. When I think about this kitchen, I think about some of the rooflines which impacted the height and the scale that we could go to with the cabinetry, but instead of allowing that to be limiting—that sink wall had a roofline situation sloping down—we didn’t just take that as the cue for the rest of the cabinetry. We took the opportunity to elongate the cabinetry, elongate the hood, and really make that feature wall





a statement even though maybe historically speaking you would think about keeping the cabinetry all at one level,” O’Brien added.

From the brilliant hues of blue woven throughout the main level, vibrantly upholstered chairs in tones of orange, and soft, muted hues of pink in the guest suite, to the lower level where tones of orange, blue, and gray collide in the bar area, the home is a dynamic take on the color and sound of coastal living, where vibrant pieces of artwork serve as cohesive threads.

“I feel like art is a puzzle. We deal with a lot of people’s art collections and sometimes you design around a specific piece, but we didn’t do that in this case because they had some of the art, they bought some of the art with us, and then they also purchased some art afterward, after we had installed and still needed pieces. It wasn’t like the art collection completely drove

the design decisions, we figured out where everything was going to go as we were moving through if I’m going to be perfectly honest,” Withers said. “And then we added pieces that we needed in the second phase of the installation, which is a fun journey, because the clients who pick us like to be a part of the journey. We get people who want to be a part of the process and love design.”

On the exterior, the renovation transformed the former, light-beige hue to a dark blue tone with contrasting white elements and added a few trim details on the front. The team also worked with a landscaper to select plants that would accentuate the natural site and water, rather than compete with it, filling in over time and helping to maintain the beach. Withers said the team also integrated the existing outdoor spaces and changed the



patio, bringing up the decking material into the landscaping so it felt more holistic rather than individual, separate spaces.

"There is the area right underneath the house where we have a lot of the nice, wicker-looking furniture and then you go out to the first patio area where the fireplace is and there is also a dining table and then you can keep going out to the beach and we have a firepit there. We wanted to create the whole picture, so not just having the house and then the beach, but rather this pathway that you could stop and do different things along the way," Withers said.

"And the house is set up to have a bunch of guests and have a lot of parties. The clients are super active people and there are kayaks and bikes, and the whole lower level is set up for entertaining. There is also a sauna and doorways all across the back of the house so you have access points everywhere to get out to the water and to nature," Withers added.

To O'Brien, this project in a way also reimagines the traditional coastal style through art, through color, and for the team at O'Brien Harris, design is about functional beauty.

"We focus on the millwork and cabinetry



end of things. We really try to merge function and beauty, but the comment we get the most from clients is that when they move into their kitchens, or they move into their bathroom or lower-level entertaining space, everything has been considered. During the design process as we are sketching and rendering things, we think about who is going to use the space and how it will be used," O'Brien said.

"How many people are going to use this bathroom: are they weekend guests, are they weeklong guests? We really drill down those details so that we can then give back a room that has the absolute function that it needs and with that comes an ease of living. I think that is super impactful not only for a family, but for everyone who moves throughout the space," O'Brien added.

For Withers, who noted having a dream team and clients who are willing to do things that are different and trust the creative design process is absolute magic, design is everything. How one feels in a space and how a space looks is important as it often affects decisions one makes in life.

"I feel like one of the things that creates happiness for people is interactions with others and wanting to use your house as a space to entertain. It is about making spaces that are totally welcoming, that work, that you don't have to feel like you can't sit on this chair because it is too fancy, everything is practical. I mean, without design we don't have life. Design enhances beauty around you, creates beautiful spaces, and creates functional spaces," Withers said.

"We were inspired by nature's color scheme and the exterior of the house feels like an extension of the interior and it's just so calming. I feel like that is part of the design of the house and it is part of the friendship we created over the years of working together and it feels very satisfying to have been a part of creating something that someone is so proud of and that they love to be in and entertain in," Withers added.

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