

CRAFTED LODGING

G R E A T L A K E S **BY**
DESIGN

Dream boat

A Wisconsin-based company has developed a legacy of designing and building custom, hand-crafted vessels for a final frontier.

RELISH | FORM | CREATIVE ENDEAVORS | TRAVEL

Inspired pairing

Text: R.J. Weick



For Kelly Konoske, president of Cottage Company Interiors in Harbor Springs, Michigan, design is a passion that has become a vocation artfully mixing the creative and the strategic. It is a vehicle in which inspired spaces come to fruition as a result of careful client collaboration and a design philosophy leveraging juxtaposition as a means to enhance its environmental backdrop.

“Design should be born out of an understanding of those who will be affected by it,” Konoske said. “I’m inspired by the perfection found in nature. My style is about designing interiors that don’t compete with, but enhance the beauty of outdoors inside the home.”

Cottage Company Interiors is a division of the Cottage Company of Harbor Springs, a multi-disciplinary construction and design firm specializing in delivering timeless cottages and homes for clients in northern Michigan and in resort towns across the country. Family-owned and in its third generation, Cottage Company of Harbor Springs offers services such as new construction and renovation in addition to its interior design experience for clients.

While architectural vernacular and interior style within the company’s portfolio showcases a diverse range, from traditional cottages and contemporary homes to shin-

gle-style estates, there is a common thread of coastal inspiration throughout. It is an element that almost transcends the more defining aspects of specific styles as the waterfront becomes an integral aspect of many of the projects, whether it is in terms of its views, natural lighting, positioning on the lot, or the surrounding nature in the background. Often it is in nature itself that inspiration is found and brought into the home, further dissolving boundaries between interior and exterior, style and environment.





“You can look at juxtapositions found in nature from the texture of tree bark and smooth leaves, colors in the sunset—vibrant reds and oranges versus the pale pinks—and I think by using juxtaposition, it leads to a style that is timeless and fresh; it is casual and polished; it is peaceful and at the same time energizing,” Konoske said. “I think if you walk through one of the doors of the homes I have designed, you would probably see large windows that let you take in the view and allow a lot of natural light to pour into the space.”

Projects, such as the Bay Street Bungalow, a new transitional cottage; Menonaqua Beach House, an approximately 5,000-square-foot traditional new home; Glenn Beach Home, a five-bedroom, six-bathroom remodel fit with custom furnishings; and the Roaring Brook Cottage, a more than 4,500-square-foot, traditional shake-shingle-style remodel; also feature use of white-painted paneling and extensive millwork. It is a perpetually fresh and timeless element that Konoske noted tends to transcend style whether it is traditional or transitional, and the wood adds a subtle sense of warmth on the interior.

“We tend to use a color palette drawn from sand and sun, as much as surf and sky, to help evoke a strong sense of place. You will also see a ton of natural materials and textures—hardwood floors juxtaposed with soft natural rugs,” Konoske said. “I love juxtaposing elements so much, because it lets us create balance and impact. It is conducive to living life in a way that supports the beauty of outdoors inside our homes, which is so important.”

While now serving as President of Cottage Company Interiors, and fostering a long-time affinity for interior design having sketched homes at the dining table when little, Konoske noted she initially pursued a career in brand management and marketing in Los Angeles, California after

earning a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Pepperdine Graziadio Business School and a Master of Business Administration from Chapman University. Upon switching the dream of a corner office with a career that utilized both the logical and creative sides of the brain, Konoske returned to her native state of Michigan to work with architects, builders, and other professionals to craft spaces clients would fall in love with.

“I thought I wanted to have a corner office at a Fortune 500 company and when I was on my way to do that, I wasn’t sure I liked the person I was becoming and at the same time I missed being close to my family. Therefore, I decided I needed to make a change and interior design was always part of my life and the family business,” Konoske said. “I was missing that creativity part in my previous job, so my husband and I moved from southern California back to my Midwest roots and the beauty of northern Michigan’s Harbor Springs.”

Konoske, who went on to study interior design at UCLA, has spent the last six years at Cottage Company Interiors working with clients.

“We create beautiful, classic cottages where generations of family gather together in drop-dead gorgeous parts of the country,” Konoske said. “Really, it means we help families make the process of building their dream vacation home or homes as easy as possible, from designing the house and building it to putting art on the walls. I think what is unique is we tend to do it all with them living far away.”

From a design standpoint, the process is meant to be a seamless and personalized one, which often means ensuring the clients are a good fit before even beginning the project. Konoske said interior design is so personal that it is one of the most important things they do even before presenting new client questionnaires.

“I really want to know if we are a good fit,” Konoske said. “To be fair, we have actually turned down jobs, because we thought we weren’t the best fit and referred them elsewhere, because we’d rather have them and the designer we referred them to singing our praises than not referring business to competitors.”

From the client questionnaires—designed to learn as much as possible as early as possible—provide insight into many key factors regarding the project, according to Konoske. Topics covered range from current client lifestyle, how each member uses each room, hobbies, likes, dislikes, expectations, vision, budget, time constraints, among others.

“We go as far as to ask every family member to sit in their most comfortable chair and provide us with those dimensions,” Konoske said. “We want to make sure everyone will be comfortable, no matter if they are tall or short. It is learning as much as we can about them and then helping them design the space that functions and is representative of their personal style and taste.”

While a well-designed space is often understated and subtle to the casual onlooker, it plays an important role in how users interact to and with an overall structure. Perhaps what is more difficult though is creating a space comfortable for 10 and intimate for two, rather than just for one or two primary users, according to Konoske. The functional versatility required in vacation homes and permanent homes has led the designer to creative solutions such as swivel chairs, built-in benches and breakfast nooks, and lofts with sliding barn doors that can either be open or closed to the rest of the home.

“As long as the client is open with us, we can make this space fit their needs perfectly,” Konoske said. “It influences you in ways you realize and ways you don’t realize. It is seamless and easy for people who live in it



and it will evoke a sense of emotion—a feeling—and honestly we ask clients at times ‘how do you want to feel in this room’ and that will help us design it.”

For Konoske, who has spent years working on new and remodeled cottages and homes, the projects tend to stay with her even as time passes. While each project has endeared itself to her, the distinctive aspect were the clients and the honor of being able to create spaces for people who will enjoy them and make memories.

“The best projects were with those clients that you have a friendship with and feel like you are a part of them. You want to do them justice. You know how much they enjoy their home and their family enjoys it and they are making memories,” Konoske said. “I’m biased, I guess, because I used to come up here in the summer when I was a kid and the family time we had up here was so precious to me. I like to create that for other people and I think those clients who shared our values of family and being outdoors, those were the ones that really resonate with me.”

