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A generational build

For Mike Schaap Builders Inc. and Benchmark Wood & Design Studios, legacy is about the relationships, the service, and the build of a generational business

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Tranquility by the lake

Text: R.J. Weick

Adina Hall, AIA, creative director and owner of Adina Hall Design in Chicago, believes good design has the power to uplift the soul. She is inspired by its ability to transform people's lives and equally inspired by the collaborative relationships built on mutual respect, creativity, and a shared desire for beauty and meaning established when working with her clients. For Hall, design is a thoughtful balance, but the work is about so much more than just design—it is about taking the time to understand her clients to deliver thoughtful, deeply personal designed spaces that feel lived in, loved, and reflective of their stories.

"Great design is about balance, and it's about balance between beauty and function, between

personal expression and timeless appeal, and between architecture and nature. I really believe that true beauty and timeless design emerge from that confluence of artistic vision and technical mastery," Hall said. "I think you really have to have both to create a successful design, and I really strive to dwell at that junction."

Hall, who is both a licensed architect and accomplished interior designer, is a storyteller at heart, crafting poetic prose that speaks to her clients through the intentional use of architectural vernacular, design language, and emotive elements. Born in Romania and inspired early on by exploring show homes and her grandfather's vocation as an architect, Hall has built a career spanning high-profile commercial and

residential work in the architectural and interior design field with over 20 years of experience in the industry. Her design philosophy is shaped by her European heritage, in which the intersection of cultural depth and timeless design allow space for both designer and client to collaborate, blending ideas, rituals, and stories into a space that speaks to soulful expression.

For longtime repeat clients of this lakefront retreat near Bangs Lake in Lake County, Illinois, it is the intersection of ideas, the blend of styles, and the marriage of story that served as both challenge and success of this warm, contemporary home. To Hall, it is a project that embodies her belief about great design, and by blending the husband-and-wife clients' often



contrasting design styles into a single vision, they were able to create something unique that reflects their personalities and their story in a cohesive and inviting way.

"This is my fourth project with the client. We actually began collaborating when I was a senior designer at a boutique interior design firm, specializing in highly custom corporate interior design solutions. I was a senior designer for his corporate headquarters, and he really enjoyed working with me. He is very particular, and I was able to really nail down his style, so after that when he purchased a home, he came to me and asked if I could help with the design of it," Hall said.

"We worked together on the rebuild and it was intended to be his forever home. However after a few years, he met his wife and when she moved in, she really felt like she was moving into his home, and they decided they wanted a home that reflected both of their styles. So, they purchased this home which was really close by on Bangs Lake," Hall added.

For the client, it was Hall's attention to detail and the time she spent learning about his lifestyle, business, and design vision—and her ability to humanize the process—that led to the successful working relationship over the years. When his sleek, contemporary styling met his wife's crafted mountain retreat aesthetic, Hall said they really trusted her to hear both of their voices and blend their styles.

"I think it is a testament to their strong relationship, because they were able to come together on decisions in a really beautiful and smooth way. He made certain concessions to account for her taste, and she made concessions for things that were important to him, and I really think the final result incorporates both of their styles in a really cohesive way," Hall said.



plete with a fireplace that obstructed views within the home—it provided a beautiful canvas in which to establish the bright, light-filled aesthetic and optimize the layout of both floors. The project saw the addition of bathrooms and walk-in closets, a laundry room, and a gym, and the crucial relocation of the fireplace as a two-way, contemporary free-standing fireplace in split-face limestone mosaic. The move helped to delineate space while capitalizing on expansive views and sightlines through the home. Hall noted the clients wanted to have a resort-like feel to their home to serve as a generational destination for family while at the same time also supported their more intimate lifestyle as a couple.

"It needed to be a tranquil and serene home for them on a daily basis and obviously needed to fit their programmatic needs. The home had really good bones, however, some of the programmatic elements were not there that needed to be there, so our first step was to dive in and really take a look at the flow of the floorplan and the functionality of it," Hall said.

"Being an architect first and a designer second, I do start with spatial planning. I want to make sure the home flows and functions the right way. I look at how furniture groupings interact with the space, so rather than the typical process of architecture first, interior design second, when I work on any project, I look at both simultaneously to make sure the circulation paths are there, that the views are there, that the flow and connection between spaces make sense. I also make sure that we can accommodate the type of seating clients want for connection or communication and are able to make adjustments to the architecture simultaneously, early on, to accommodate for those things," Hall added.



Throughout the home, a light color palette is accented with indigo and teal, and floating vanities and stone vessel sinks can be found in the bathrooms. Custom-stained oak floors and marble tiles reflect an authenticity of materiality and a commitment to durability, and there is a softness to its clean lines, a warmth to its contemporary elements that speaks to its surrounding natural landscape—as if the timbered beams and ceiling of the living room grew as an extension of the land and traditional boundaries of its windows recede into the backdrop between indoors and outdoors.

“The clients wanted a light, bright, natural palette, so we did use a lot of natural materi-

als. The tone of the flooring itself was a key point, and we worked with our custom wood flooring provider to develop a custom stain that would act as a neutral backdrop to the rest of the design. We wanted something that wouldn’t fight with all the wood in the space, so we developed this whitewashed oak floor finish,” Hall said.

“Everything is fairly neutral, inspired by the lake, inspired by nature. We have a few pops of color here and there, which are indigo and green and light blue, colors that you see looking out the window. We wanted everything to be inspired by their aesthetic as well as the views, so it feels like an extension of the

lake and the beach and there was an obvious indoor-outdoor connection,” Hall added.

Hall also said she believes natural materials enhance wellbeing and tries to use sustainable and natural materials as much as possible on projects, but spatial optimization comes first.

“We were able to do that in this project, which is really great and it really improved the final result. I believe that for me, that strong indoor-outdoor connection is key to creating a space the feels good for us,” Hall said. “When we talk about the relationship that we have with the landscape, it comes down to biophilic design, which is proven to enhance our wellbeing and its definitely a key trend for 2025—it has been in 2024—and I’m personally a big fan of biophilic design and finding every possibility to incorporate it in my projects to make them stronger and make them feel good. Homes influence the way we live so much, and they can either support it or detract from it.”

For Hall, design is meant to uplift, inspire, and transform daily life, and the interior architecture and design studio strives to deliver homes that prioritize family wellbeing, connection, and long-term values that blend beauty, practicality, and deeply personal expression that has the ability to grow and adapt to its users’ new chapters. She has witnessed firsthand how previous homes have impacted lifestyle and shaped behavior for her clients—and the subsequent transformation of both when they are able to engage and interact with spaces that are truly designed for them—and said it is important to understand from the onset clients’ rituals, personalities, and how they move through their home and go about their day in order to create a space that helps them live their best life.

“We really had a wonderful working relationship with this client, and we are very grateful for them trusting us with all of their home renovations...The architecture of this home is really striking. It has that vaulted ceiling structure that is really enveloping, that is beautiful. I love these transformations, and I can see the before and after when I walk into a space. I mean, the location itself was stunning. It sits really close to the lake and has really beautiful gardens, so I was excited for the opportunities that the clients had in this home,” Hall said.

“It is just such a beautiful blend of two souls coming together, two styles coming together, and the home itself, the cottage-like architecture suited her taste a lot and then the contemporary design and pieces reflect his style. The way that everything blends and works together creates this slow-paced living. It still kind of takes my breath away,” Hall added.