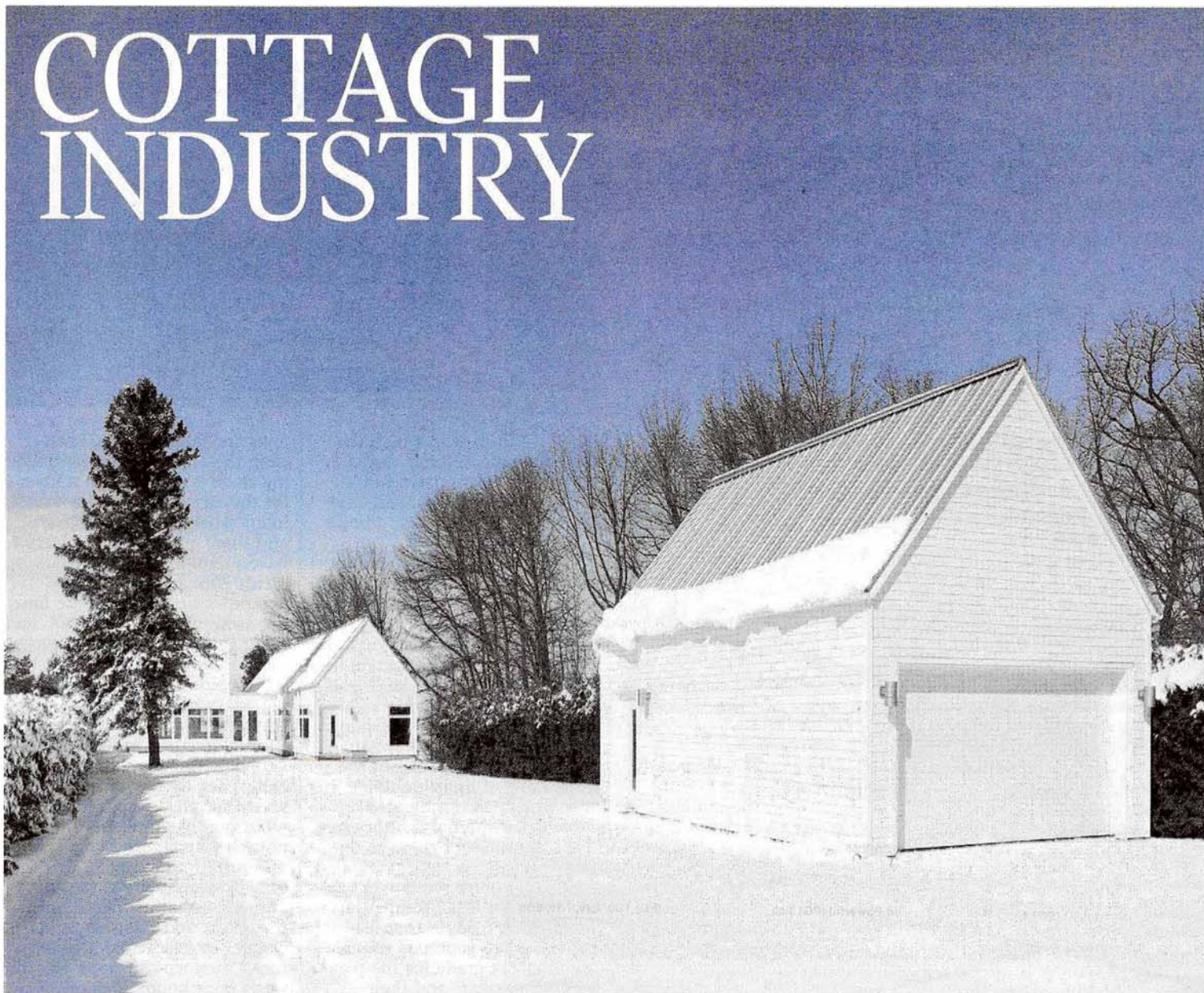


Globe Real Estate

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TOM ARBAN PHOTOGRAPHY

ARCHITECTURE Architect Cindy Rendely takes a stripped-down approach to re-imagining a friend's lakeside retreat **PAGE 13**

LIVING SPACES

New cottage a happy compromise

Replacing an old friend's beloved but tired summer home forced architect to condense her design flair to its essence

WILL JONES

It was one of the smallest budgets that I have ever worked with, but I believe the house is one of the strongest architectural pieces that I have ever designed."

Architect Cindy Rendely was taken on a journey of professional rediscovery with the design of this lakeside cottage and she has a lifelong friend and his family to thank for pushing her to go against her tendency to fuss over the details and to condense her design flair to its absolute essence.

Located on the eastern shore of Lake Simcoe, until recently the long thin lot was presided over by a 60-year-old cottage, built by the great-grandfather of the family whom Ms. Rendely came to know well as she grew up in Brantford, Ont. With their ancestral cottage now in a "very tired" state, the current head of the family, and the architect's childhood friend, turned to Ms. Rendely to design them a new but affordable house that would accommodate three generations.

The new cottage is arranged as three distinct volumes. From the road, the garage comes first, its rectangular form and steep pitched roof with minimal overhang a precursor of what is to come and a study of what Ms. Rendely gleefully refers to as "a child's stick drawing design." Set back, separated by a small section of lawn, is a long thin single-storey building located on the same east west axis as the garage. Replicating the garage in form, this volume contains four bedrooms, a communal bathroom and the kitchen portion of the main living space.

Adjacent to the bedroom block, at its west, lakeside end is the third building, a two-storey element that houses the main living space, which links seamlessly with the aforementioned kitchen, along with the master bedroom and ensuite. This building has a flat roof, in contrast to the pitched vernacular of the garage and bedroom buildings. It seems at odds with them but as Ms. Rendely explains, it is one detail of many that was arrived at during discussions with the family about this project that became so personal.

"There were some members of the extended family who didn't want to tear down the existing cottage at all; it held many memories for them," Ms. Rendely said. "They were very nostalgic about the old place and so the design of the new house does make reference to the original cottage both in its white colouring and pitched roof."

However, where the old cottage turned its back to the lake, Ms. Rendely's design presents an almost transparent main living space, with views out to the lake in the west and the garden to the



Architect Cindy Rendely said that because of cost concerns the project's success depended on the use of geometry and form. PHOTOS BY TOM ARBAN



east. The new cottage is a great improvement; the memories that the family holds dear will come with time.

"The family wanted the cottage to have a pitched roof; they liked the traditional. I wanted it to have a flat roof because I'm a modernist architect. We went back and forth, arguing for and against each solution and I came to realize that my preconceived ideas were perhaps not all correct. I came to see that the local vernacular and family ideals were important."

The result is a harmonious

compromise that creates two distinct volumes: the flat-roofed lakefront volume and the bedroom building with its steeply pitched roof. The buildings, though physically joined, contrast – male and female, ying and yang – and complement.

Similarly, Ms. Rendely conceded to the use of white PVC windows, due to the constraints of the budget. "Whereas normally I would flatly refuse to entertain a product that I dislike so vehemently – I hate how white-plastic windows pop out at you from every brick-clad subdivision –

here the client insisted because of cost constraints and the lack of maintenance required. This decision pushed me to think differently, to work around 'my problem.' " The architect's solution was to clad the entire façade in white prepainted wooden siding, thus rendering the white-plastic windows invisible and presenting a clean, minimal aesthetic.

Materials, features and fixtures all were considered and critiqued by Ms. Rendely and her client friend in order to minimize costs. This rigorous process worked

well with the architect's admitted preoccupation for perfection and helped create a beautifully harmonious interior that utilizes a minimal palette of warm maple plus grey-porcelain tile and matching laminate. However, what the paring back of design gestures also did was bring the realization that geometry and form were paramount to the project's success.

"Although I am known for the Ravine House and the use of expensive materials, modernity is not about the latest, greatest ..." says Ms. Rendely. "Here, scale, massing and proportion became the absolute drivers; connection to the landscape and respect for the surrounding context were vital."

The constraints put upon the architect – cost limitations, vernacular considerations and strong personal ties – have combined to produce not a watered-down project but a distillation of design, a wonderfully mature solution to a complex set of challenges.

"It might seem I was set up to fail by working with people whom I've known forever and whom I love but we've come out of the project as friends, and I now realize that they pushed me to produce what I consider is one of my most accomplished works to date," says Ms. Rendely with a smile.

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