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SUMMER 2010

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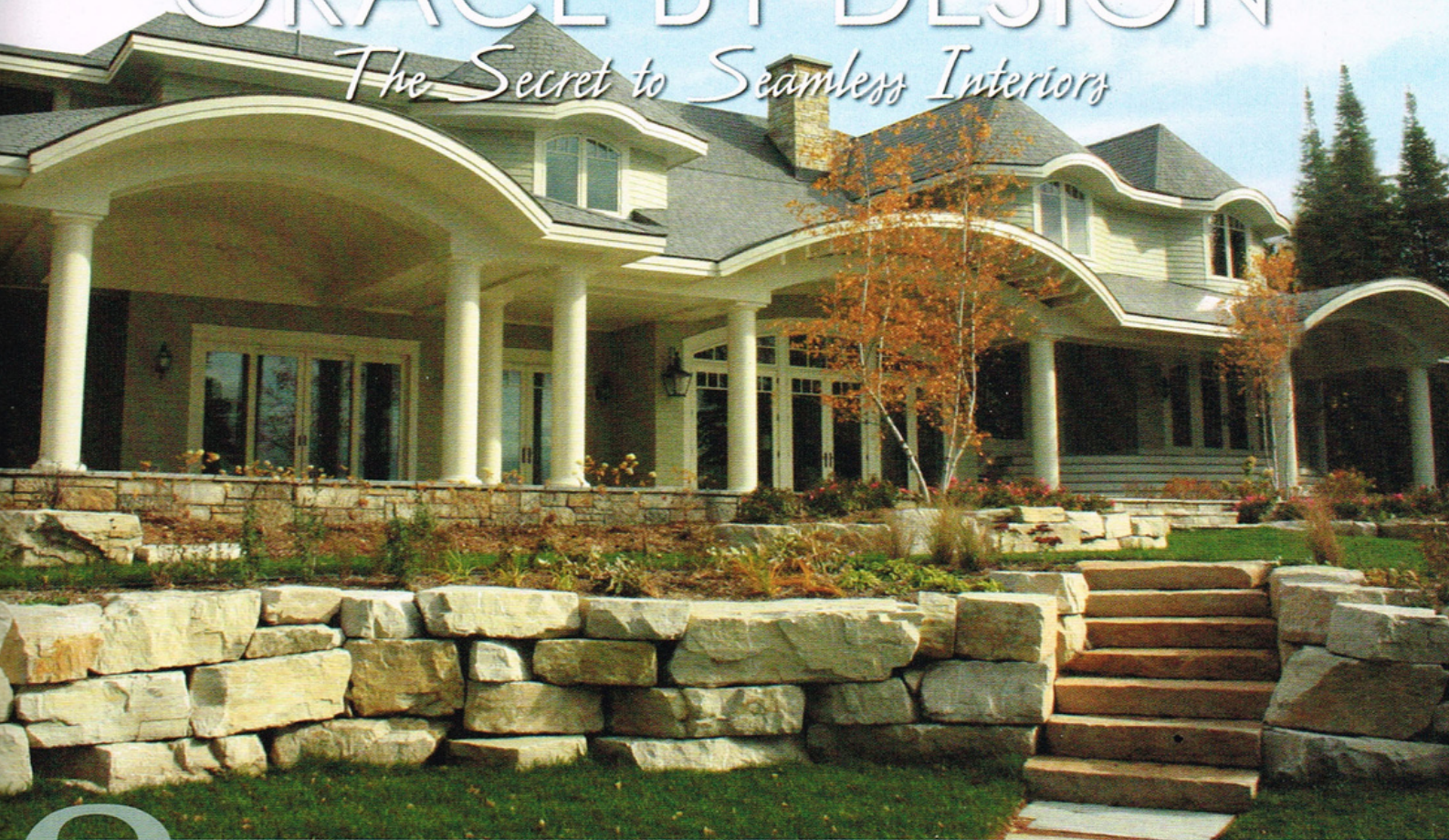
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GRACE BY DESIGN

The Secret to Seamless Interiors



BY ELIZABETH BOOTH O'TOOLE
PHOTOS BY JAMES YOCHUM PHOTOGRAPHY

a home is built in one of a thousand ways. On one hand, a lone builder and handful of sub-contractors can get the job done. But, well on the other end of the spectrum, a team of accomplished builders with the right combination of industry experts operate in tandem to get the job done. Suffice it to say, this 10,000-square-foot Lake Charlevoix masterpiece falls into the latter category and the results are, well, nothing short of exquisite.

Every corner of this home is truly a demonstration of multiple talents, led by builders Keith Baker of G.T. Home Enterprises and Ben Brower of Brower Development and Construction. Classic dormers and arches punctuate the sage-hued, all-cedar siding while substantial white pillars support a wrap-around porch that, unlike most wrap-arounds, circles all four sides of the home and is anchored by a glittering custom-cut Idaho Silver flagstone porch. The porch—easily connecting many different exterior areas—reflects a clear theme throughout the house: easy transitions.

Just as this building/design construction team operates like a well-oiled machine, the entire interior transitions gracefully between halls and rooms throughout. According to Brower, "It's all in the details," he says. "I like to create a home that just feels good. Right. Solid. Warm. You may not know every detail of why it feels right, but we do and that's the difference."

Inside the arched entryway, rich walnut floors coupled with Benjamin Moore's soft owl Gray paint throughout the main level, trigger both a serene and sophisticated ambience. Sleek wrought-iron light fixtures adorn almost every room. "We had a lot of fun incorporating [the owners'] contemporary taste into what would eventually become

a family lakeside cottage," recalls Laurie Seltenright, owner of L.S. Design. In the name of cottage design, she eased her client's steadfast black and white contemporary preferences into the world of color, but with baby steps. Dark chocolate walls in the children's bunk room are paired with a colorful Pottery Barn chandelier and pulled together with whimsical print from Clark & Clark fabric.

Seltenright worked closely with Liz Firebaugh, CKD of Signature Kitchens on everything from selecting granite, sketching out trim details and designing the elaborate transition between kitchen cabinets, to crown molding and the coffered ceiling in the kitchen. Front and center to what is typically the busiest room is the island featuring a completely seamless 2 1/4-inch slab of Absolute Black granite heavier than some cars and reinforced in the floor below. Seams are absent in the backsplash, too, and so are switches. All are cleverly tucked underneath the upper cabinets to allow ample attention to the exquisite Dutch Made white cabinetry which serve not only as a place for cups and bowls, but also as a light source. The glass-front, above-counter cabinets flanking the sink are actually mounted directly on windows, allowing natural light into the kitchen through backless cabinets.

Directly above the cabinets is one of many examples of this team's excellence. "Look a little closer at the center point above the sink," notes Brower. "The coffered ceiling box beams centered above the sink and windows run directly through two more rooms in the main level to land dead center above the fireplace." These same elaborate beams—designed to warm the massive combined rooms—also house structural steel beams, speaker wiring, drain pipes and more. Surely a building/design feat not for the timid!

Building and design continued to interchange easily as Brower

ose to custom design a special shaper blade for the 1/4-inch paneling throughout most of the house. As a result, the paneling is one-of-a-kind and transitions seamlessly from one room to the next without any sudden changes in elevation. In fact, the build was so carefully orchestrated that the 2/3-height main level hall paneling gradually sweeps around the upper staircase to become a 1/3-height wall paneling, then ends exactly where the molding meets the wall. Genius.

Also in the upper level TV room/landing, the bar area and fireplace create a space that welcomes guests to relax and unwind. The soft and inviting theme carries over to the room's dormer windows, which seem to transition smoothly—and somewhat impossibly—between the walls and ceiling. They are in fact, double bowed. Windows with an upper arch but also—in an impressive combination of engineering and woodwork—bow outward as well. In building terms it is known as a compound radius, to the layman it's simply beautiful. Even the smaller details lend themselves to beauty: a closer inspection of the wood grain capping the newel posts and you will see that it has been flipped and matched to form a perfectly symmetrical grain pattern, barely visible through the stain.

Interestingly, in a home rich with expert transitions and details, the room that get the most reaction is not really a room at all. It's the upper level "sleeping porch" furnished with "bed-swings" hanging by thick ropes anchored to the ceiling and outfitted with extra-deep cushions, a cheerful throw rug and plenty of pillows. It is, essentially, a child's dream come true. As a young girl, the lady of this house had a sleeping porch at an aunt's house when she was growing up and loved it. This team, with their expertise and superior communication, brought that memory back to life, but with a new twist, style and grace all their own.

TOP: Hidden features such as a secret grocery delivery door, hidden outlets and under-cabinet lighting make this kitchen both hardworking and peaceful. Our Cool Feature of the Issue Award goes to the 12-foot-wide glass doors that slide into a 20-inch-thick wall virtually disappearing, instantly merging the inside with the outside.

M. TOP: What looks like a natural extension of the kitchen doubles as a desk area—secretly wired and ready for Internet, computer, printer and more.

M. BOTTOM: The home's many artistic angles are truly the focus when ho-hum kitchen operations are tucked in alcoves like these secretly stored spice racks.

RIGHT: Black and white themes are present throughout the home but all are softened by a velvety gray coat of Benjamin Moore paint on walls throughout the lower level.





TOP: From fireplace to furniture, almost every accent was custom created for this home. The coffee and end tables were crafted precisely to the family's specifications.

LEFT: Despite a 1,260-square-foot space, the kitchen, dining room and living room are each cleanly identified through expert design and work seamlessly together.

RIGHT: Of the many excellent transitions throughout the home, this one is a borderline optical illusion: the hallway's 2/3 customized paneling eases around the corner and converts to 1/3 paneling up the stairs. Barely discernible in the paneling to the left of the stairs is the secret "grocery bag door" onto the pantry counter.





“Sleeping Options for Everyone”

TOP: Arches big and little vacillate from framing a captivating lake view to leading inside the many extra closets found throughout the home.

LEFT: With arched or bowed windows throughout, a deep-set, freestanding bathtub mimics the trend and lends a softness to the room.

BOTTOM: A favorite conversation piece and grandchildren’s play area is the fanciful outdoor sleeping porch. Created from the owner’s fond childhood recollection of an Aunt’s house with a sleeping deck, this playful porch will surely create a lifetime of new memories.





“Clever Craftsmanship in Every Corner”



TOP LEFT: Engineering the bowed and arched cabinet was no easy matter. In this home's windows, walls and now even in bathroom cabinetry, you can see this complex and artistic theme continued.

TOP RIGHT: Extensive and intricate custom wood paneling and cabinetry created by builder Ben Brower, creates an office fit for a king and queen. Surprisingly, it is one of the owner's favorite rooms in the house.

BOTTOM LEFT: Serene and easy. Guests are truly compelled to leave their cares behind when coming to this soft and welcoming lakeside retreat.

BOTTOM RIGHT: In this Jack and Jill bathroom servicing two guest bedrooms, clean lines and crisp color contrast reflect the contemporary undertones throughout the home.



cluster of colorful lampshades sets the theme for this go-to children's get-away. Smartly located just off the upper entertainment area, and not too far from the sleeping porch, this happy place will soon be a dream come true for all seasons and many years to come.

- Architect – **ELAINE KEISER ARCHITECT INC.**
- Character Grade Walnut Flooring – **J. CHATTAWAY INC.**
- Drywall – **INTEGRITY CUSTOM DRYWALL**
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Meet
**Keith Baker
 and Ben Brower**

Ben Brower of Brower Development and Construction operates a company that is the result of a multi-generational learning experience. Currently operating under the third generation of family ownership, he has been located in Northern Michigan since 2001.

According to Brower, "As a general contracting service we facilitate all aspects of the design/build process; however, we have a passion for, and an expertise in, the interior trim field that we feel is unsurpassed. We strive to be cost conscious in all phases of the construction process without ever losing sight of our ultimate goal, the finest quality finished product possible."

Before moving his family to Northern Michigan, Brower, along with his father Roger Brower, worked on the north shore of Chicago doing mostly historical restorations and remodeling. "Having the experience of the large scale restorations has really helped us in all aspects of designing and building. Being able to anticipate potential problems early on and correct them before they become costly in time or money has gone a long way towards keeping many customers happy," states Brower.

Keith Baker of GT Home Enterprises has been in the construction industry for 45 years. A career that began as he purchased older homes and remodeled them for re-sale evolved into speculative housing and from there into a custom home construction company. Most of Keith's homes were built in the Traverse City area, with as many as 12 homes completed in one year. The Lake Charlevoix home in this feature came as a referral from a previous customer who had an excellent building experience with Keith and shared his name with a friend.

Although both contracting companies have completed many projects individually, the combination of their efforts, along with the design team and homeowners on this home resulted in a truly remarkable finished product.

For additional information, call Ben Brower at (231) 838-0090.