



LAKE ESCAPE

Serene interiors and a carefully considered floor plan make this waterfront home in Alabama as alluring as the water itself.

WRITER AND PRODUCER CATHY STILL MCGOWIN | PHOTOGRAPHER JEAN ALLSOPP





OPPOSITE, ALL: Using authentic and regional materials including Tennessee fieldstone, cedar-shake shingles, pecky cypress, and reclaimed wood beams inside and out gives the impression that the house sprang from the land. THIS PHOTO: Floor-to-ceiling steel-framed windows and doors in the foyer open onto a walled courtyard. To add interest yet keep eyes on the view, interior designer Liz Hand Woods chose low-profile accessories and a glass console.





The main living area was designed to include the screen porch on temperate days. “When you open the doors, it’s really one big room,” architect Jeffrey Dungan says. To unite the spaces, Dungan carried the living room’s lofty ceiling height to the porch and repeated materials such as the pavers, stone walls, and wood beams.

Having a single mind-set when designing a lake home is easy. It’s all about the views, right? Architect Jeffrey Dungan certainly sets his sights on the scenery, but he believes a home should be a destination in and of itself. Working with Anna and Jim Cooper on their Lake Martin, Alabama, home, Dungan aimed to create a getaway equal to its stunning lake views. “I didn’t want my clients to say, ‘I can’t wait to get to the lake,’” Dungan says. “I wanted them to say, ‘I can’t wait to get to my house *at* the lake.’”

With that goal in mind, Dungan designed a stone-clad house with a series of transition areas leading to the big reveal—the lake. “Walking through a house is an experience,” he says. “I wanted to stretch it out and offer moments of respite before you even get to the view.”

Upon approach, a meandering drive descends to a pea-gravel motor court and the home’s main entrance—a 13-foot-tall gate that leads into a walled courtyard with a bubbling fountain. A step inside the main entry offers glimpses of the living spaces through passageways and arched openings, all pointing to vistas through strategically placed windows.

In the soaring 20-foot-tall great-room, steel-framed windows and doors usher in light, while lake breezes filter through the screen porch. A bank of windows wraps around the corners of the adjacent dining area to absorb the morning’s northeastern light, while the kitchen windows capture the sunrise. “When designing a house, you have to look at topography, views, and sunlight,” Dungan says. “The sun, and the way it moves across the house, trumps everything. I can only ignore it at my own peril.”

Interior designer Liz Hand Woods lent her light touch to the home, welcoming in soft, warm grays drawn from the limestone-washed wood and stone. “We wanted to get away from all that brown everyone has experienced for the last 10 years,” Woods says. To keep the view at the forefront, she chose low-profile seating with clean lines, sheer linen draperies that move with the breeze, glass lamps, and airy chandeliers. “I didn’t want any one thing to stand out and grab your attention,” Woods says. “This is meant to be a soothing retreat.”

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“This isn’t an ‘open the front door and there’s the lake’ kind of house. There’s a higher level of interest when you walk into a house and things are slowly revealed.”

ARCHITECT JEFFREY DUNGAN





OPPOSITE: Woods chose a medium-tone warm gray for the kitchen cabinets to balance the weight of the stone and beams used throughout the house. Alabama white marble and hide-covered barstools provide contrast. LEFT: Among Dungan's methods for transitioning spaces was altering ceiling heights. "The dining room is open to the living room, but this space feels more intimate thanks to the lower ceiling and pecky cypress," Woods says. The height of the dining table and chairs breaks just below the window molding for unobstructed views of the outdoors.



Q&A with Architect Jeffrey Dungan

Natural stone makes a big impact indoors and out within Jeffrey Dungan's designs. He shares how this bold material can influence both the architecture and interior palette.

Q: Why do you like to work with stone?

A: As an exterior skin, stone is great for creating a thicker defense against the sun in summer as well as the wind and cold during winter when used in traditional ways. Unfortunately,

our culture is very good at finding an ever-less expensive way to do things and also synthetic and artificial versions. The old-school versions are time-tested, and we love them for the authentic character they provide. If there is anything that shouldn't be fake, I'm pretty sure it's stone.

Q: How do you choose stone?

A: I like to use stone that is regionally indigenous so its colors feel appropriate to a place. The Tennessee fieldstone we chose

for this home has a lot of different colors in it and can be visually busy. To even it out, we worked with a limestone wash to gently unify those colors.

Q: How do you arrange the pattern of stone?

A: Stone can be very organic and natural, or it can be shaped for a regulated, formal look. The stone on this house is regulated—it's all rectangular, but it's not all the same size, so that creates a much less formal feeling.

Q: You used other materials such as concrete pavers, pecky cypress, and reclaimed beams to complement the stone at this home. How do these work together?

A: Blending a house into its site is important. The lake and outdoors are such a big part of this home. I wanted the house and the site to come across as one entity instead of two separate things. We spend a lot of time creating a palette of materials that play well together to ensure architectural integrity.





OPPOSITE: Screen porches are a mainstay in Alabama thanks to the mostly year-round temperate climate. In cooler months, the room's fireplace chases the chill. In summer, the pool and lake beckon. The lot slopes gently to the dock, where lake toys await. FAR LEFT and LEFT: Walls in the master bedroom are clad in paneled wood sporting a whitewashed stain. Woods repeated the treatment in the master bath for continuity but shifted it to the ceiling to allow the elegance of traditional recessed-panel cabinetry to shine.

Floor plan

TOTAL SQ. FT.: 5,046
 BEDROOMS: 5
 BATHROOMS: 5 full, 1 half

