



LAKESIDE RETREAT

But Is It A Cabin?

BY KATHERINE HILLBRAND

We have a great love affair with cabins in this country. My colleague, Dale Mulfinger and others have written about and documented many examples of this treasured American icon. They state that the cabin often expresses our love of old world charm, practicality, relaxed living and is more often than not, unpretentious and even whimsical in nature. So when I drove to northern Wisconsin this past weekend to see one of my recently completed ►►






cabin designs, I wondered about the distinction. After all, my clients had asked me to design a modern lake “cabin” for them.

I decided to compare the attributes of the recently completed modern structure with a limited list of traditional cabin features to see how they line up. The items that are checked below generally agree between the structures while those without do not:

<u>TRADITIONAL CABIN ATTRIBUTES</u>	<u>MODERN LAKE PLACE</u>
Lakeview orientation.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lakeview orientation
Diminutive scale.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium scale w/low roof
No basement.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No basement; cantilevered porch
Pitched roof w/ overhangs.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Overhangs; flat and single pitch
Blends into its setting.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hunkered into side of hill
Informal atmosphere.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open plan promotes comradery
Cozy and intimate spaces.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Modest size rooms, not cozy, "comfortable" instead
Social, open kitchen.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social, open kitchen
Open shelves for storage.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open shelves, no cabinet doors
Informal dining.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dining part of living & kitchen
Shared bathrooms.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shared bath; private couple's bath
Small bedrooms.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small bedrooms, one with bunk beds
Wall closets or hooks.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wall closets, curtains, no doors
Fireplace focus.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fireplace focus
Stone fireplace.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Board-formed concrete
Woodsy.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Steel posts and beams
Natural materials	
Wood paneling.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Only in couple's bedroom
Timber	<input type="checkbox"/> Only at steps between floor levels, no timber post or beams
Stone.....	<input type="checkbox"/> No stone
Simple built-in furniture.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Future built-in sofa only
Textured; even cluttered interior....	<input type="checkbox"/> Clean lines and serene feeling
Small paned windows.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Large expanses of glass
Warm colors.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Cool gray pallet



Though there are a number of features aligned with cabin architecture, there are an equal number of variations. The question is whether the modern expression of this structure agrees with our notion of a cabin. Perhaps it is an evolution of the cabin paradigm. Perhaps it is another category altogether. Perhaps we should call a modern cabin a “Mabin” or “Cabern”? Any other suggestions? 



Katherine Hillbrand enthusiastically engages with her clients to find design solutions that articulate functional beauty. Her work ultimately embodies the spirit of each specific circumstance and place. She is known to incorporate both handcrafted timber joinery and common, everyday materials in unusual and whimsical compositions.

Katherine joined SALA Architects, Inc. in 1986 and became a Principal in 1995. She received a Bachelor of Arts in 1965 and a Master of Architecture in 1986 from the University of Minnesota. She is a registered architect and certified interior designer in Minnesota, Utah, Michigan and Wisconsin. She has been published both regionally and in national publications.