

House on Lake Okoboji

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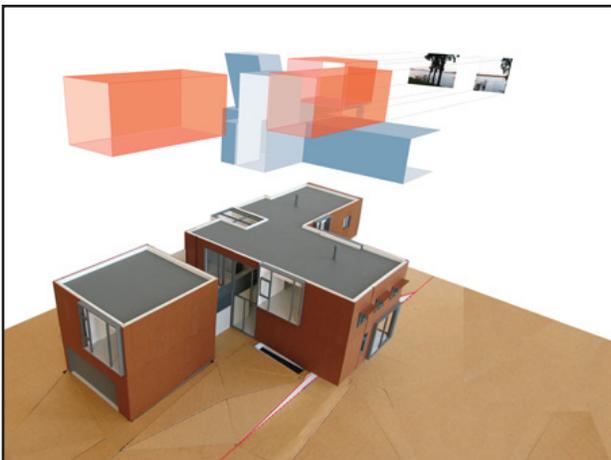
"It's all about the lake."

Art and architecture are practices, not sciences. The constructions of science aspire to universal application. Pictures and buildings need only work where they are. – Dave Hickey

For a lake residence on a diminutive lot in rural Iowa we conceived of a house as a series of spatial frames that offer a focused and private experience on an otherwise densely populated shore. This second home resides in a resort area that appears as an oasis in the midst of the Midwestern "corn desert". While the location is more than 2

1/2 hours from the nearest city, it has a distinctly suburban feel as small cottages give way to new McMansions. Not at all nostalgic for the cottages of years gone by (one of the owners spent childhood years visiting the region), the owners nevertheless wanted a house that was "all about the lake" and the ring of Burr-Oak trees that bounds the lake from the endless expanse of farmland beyond. For the small site within the oak forest we designed a house that floats between the trees like a hammock. In response to the narrow wedge-shaped lot with the lake at one end, we conceived of the house as a 3-dimensional set of "blinders" that obscure

the very-close neighbors and gradually open up to the lake beyond. Passing through the house one moves from areas of density to areas closest to the lakeshore imbued with an almost diaphanous quality – the house is a spatial gradient.



SPATIAL TUBES

To achieve this we designed the house with a drape of opaque and slatted vertical Ipe cladding over

a stacked set of spatial tubes (the primary living spaces) that are open to the lake and woods views, but closed to neighbors on the sides. The first level is dominated by continuous subtly amorphous space that opens to the exterior in with lake views in several directions. Inspired by *Consejo al Espacio* (Advice to Space), a sculpture by Eduardo Chillida, this space bounds the primary living spaces while suggesting connections and extensions to the surrounding landscape, lake and sky. The simple spatial tubes of the second level are completely open to framed views at their ends, again suggesting further extension into the distant views while at the same time blocking out the immediate neighbors. Light and air also enters these rooms from the side through windows set behind the slatted Ipe cladding. Dense service spaces fill the remaining volume.

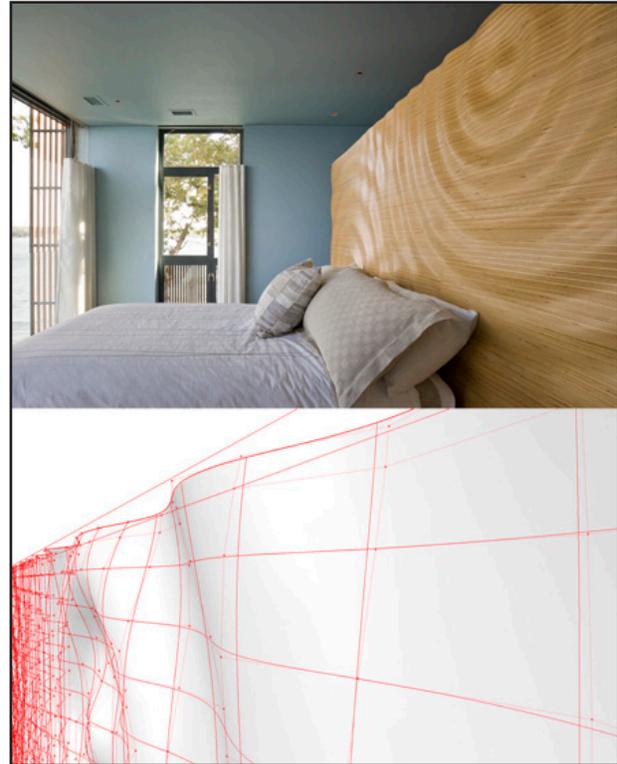


View from upper floor into translucent polycarbonate light shaft under 10' x 10' skylight; Spatial Tubes diagram with model; Kitchen / Dining / Living area with lake beyond.



VOLUMETRIC COLOR

In contrast to the spatial tubes of the public areas, the smaller private spaces (bedrooms and bathrooms) are treated with a pronounced sense of interiority. As spaces become increasingly intimate, the intensity of color increases as well. All interior surfaces in these rooms are subsumed by intense color to the extent that each feels like a zone of pure color. Here color becomes equivalent to the Lake that dominates the spatial tubes, providing an autonomous interiority in contrast to the site-oriented tubes. Color becomes an important tool of space making, an additional layer that can reinforce or contradict the other components of spatial geometry, intensifying the experience or adding complexity.



Boys' bathroom; Master Bedroom and Lake Cabinet with surface model of cabinet face.

LAKE CABINET

With the increasing use of digital fabrication in the production of architecture the expressive task of the detail shifts from the articulation of joints to the articulation of surfaces.

The cabinet is the primary built feature in the master bedroom in the House on Lake Okoboji. All sides of the cabinet are finished with horizontally-laminated Baltic Birch plywood (stacked slabs of plywood with veneer edges exposed). The back is a wall of flush doors while front side becomes a large headboard for the bed, facing the lake view. Studying the morphology of rippling water, we developed a range of parameters for a computer animation of the water's surface. We then optimized this surface for fabrication and output code for a 3-axis cnc-router to cut the waveform into blank slabs of plywood prepared for the job. Here, the uniqueness of the supple surface is contrasted by the repetitive horizontality of the veneer layers.

CONCLUSION

Surface materiality and color are important tools of space making that can reinforce or contradict the other components of spatial geometry, intensifying the experience or adding complexity. The House on Lake Okoboji, like much of our work, is rigorously detailed while eschewing strict formal order in favor of responsive, flexible spaces that remain open to the improvisations of everyday life. The project strives for specificity neither from a topographic relationship to site nor references to contextual material and form but from the construction of unique experiences and events.

