retreat becomes a home

NATURAL WONDER

INTERIOR DESIGN BY KAY ROOT
ARCHITECTURAL RENOVATION
OF MAIN HOUSE & DESIGN
OF ADDITIONAL STRUCTURES
BY FREDERICK CROSLEY BALL
LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY DAVID ROOT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CASEY SILLS
PRODUCED BY MARY JANE RYBURN
TEXT BY LINDA E. CLOPTON

the pavilion

OPENING PAGES: Fashioned after Adirondack camps, the Roots' two-story pavilion structure was built of white cedar with branchwork detail in stripped sumac. Cedar board-and-batten roof. Banister, railing and ceiling handmade by Andre Poineau. Cedar table and chairs, designed by David Root, made by local craftsmen. Jan Barboglio wood bowl with iron bird handles. Handwoven red linen runner. Harvest arrangements throughout by Mary Jane Ryburn. ABOVE AND RIGHT: Stripped cedar mantel on fieldstone fireplace. Pine fish by folk artist Keith Bunker. Indoor cedar furniture, designed by David Root, made locally.

ONCE UPON A TIME.... HOW QUICKLY THOSE WORDS ENGAGE the imagination. For designer Kay Root, they instilled a lifelong passion for scavenging. "When my sister and I were little," she recalls, "our father made up an ongoing bedtime story about a small animal who finds a hollow tree. He goes about building a home inside, and it's all out of found objects in the woods—nature items or odd little things like a butterscotch candy wrapper."

Night after night, the story lulled the girls to sleep, but Kay's mind busily continued the narrative. "My eye was always looking for that thing that could become something else." Today, she has a growing reputation for artistic "assemblages" and miniature rooms she puts in box frames. On a larger scale, her creative collecting adorns the home she and husband David built in Harbor Springs, Michigan. "I really like to arrange and rearrange, so my house is constantly in motion." She maintains a neutral palette to showcase her eclectic treasures.

When the Roots began turning the vacation home they had built in 1988 into their full-time residence, David came up with the master plan and enlisted the help of a neighbor, architect Frederick Ball. The project included a guesthouse with a tower for watching boats on Lake Michigan. Then there was an addition to the main house. Ball tied the components together through the roof pitch, porch details, limestone columns and cedar-shake siding. Beautiful woods, most of them indigenous, create softly rustic interiors.

the main house

ABOVE: Cotton slipcover on Arhaus chair. Galbraith & Paul floor lamp. Antique European pine table; antique pine and hickory handmade stools. Tramp art twig table. Antique wood swimmer. Merida hemp rug. Basswood floors. LEFT: Fieldstone wall, limestone caps and pillars. OPPOSITE: Walls of pickled aspen. Basswood custom doors. Antique pine trestle table. Antique English farm table cut down for coffee table. French lacquered chair, c. 1860; slipcover from vintage linen tablecloth. LEE Coveralls cotton on LEE Furniture seating. Galbraith & Paul silk pillows. James Peery oil above French pine chest, 18th c.

In 1996, an outdoor pavilion was added as a separate structure. Built of cedar with a board-and-batten roof, it has a decorative railing made of stripped sumac. "The pavilion is back in the woods and very serene," says Kay, "a whole different take from being on the water."

Kay's freestanding studio began to take shape three years ago. "I wanted it casual, sort of unfinished and rustic. Fred gave it its fun uniqueness." Taking cues from gatehouses of old estates, Ball developed a small two-story structure with a porte cochere. Kay's studio occupies the entire second floor, where she often finds herself gazing out the windows. Sometimes she happens to see a bald eagle soaring. In the summer, migrating monarch butterflies put on a show. "It's both distraction and inspiration."

For a confirmed scavenger, Root keeps her house remarkably uncluttered. "I do try to be organized." Even her storage has charm, ranging from an antique Danish cabinet to vintage woven baskets. In her studio, muffin tins and galvanized pans corral small objects, and she displays her artwork on built-in shelves. "The studio feels to me like an adult playhouse—because of the scale of it and just being surrounded with all my stuff. Rules don't apply when I'm in there. I can have it be any way I want it to be.

"I never did have a dollhouse," she adds, "but that hollow tree trunk with its found furnishings stayed in my head. Now I always hunt for treasures." □

the studio

Wide-plank painted pine lines Kay Root's studio. Dress, 1950s, mounted with safety pins on canvas. Vintage baskets. Antique framed butterflies and ironstone lids. Rocky Mountain Hardware on doors. Bentwood chair and child's chair, both antiques. LEFT: Pulley lamp by Architects & Heroes above French oak *fissu* table, c. 1840. Antique metal stool. Designer's "bookshelf art" and collectibles line wall shelves. OPPOSITE: Native fieldstone fireplace and mantel by Kay Root. Shell mirror and plaster deer head are antiques. Floor lamp made by Kay Root from tree limb. Antique wicker chair with Galbraith & Paul linen pillow.