

THE LowDown Homes & Gardens



Soaring dream home scores architecture award nod

Paul Kariouk's m.o.r.e. cabin seemingly floats in the canopy above a lake near Wakefield. Photo courtesy of Scott Norsworthy



By Hunter Cresswell

Breathtaking cabin offers unparalleled views of Gatineau Hills

Nestled away in the Gatineau Hills, a cabin in the forest canopy soars over a lake.

The cabin belongs to its creator, Ottawa architect Paul Kariouk, and it was one of 17 finalists for an Ontario Association of Architects 2022 design excellence award.

"I was planning this all my life," Kariouk said about the stunning structure.

The 950 square foot, three-season, off-grid cabin is built on a steep hillside, with

one end soaring more than 60 feet above the ground.

"I'm personally drawn to steep terrain and difficult [building] sites," Kariouk said. "It's a creative challenge. With clients, I encourage them to look for the diamond in the rough; the lot others would have looked over."

He said that this saves them money buying land and can make for more beautiful home designs when he works with the land to create the clients' vision.

The cabin is located on a private lake near Wakefield. He and his partner, Tony Gioventu, call it the m.o.r.e. cabin, with each letter in "m.o.r.e." being one of their grandmothers' initials.

"Our families are new to

Canada, and they had hard lives," Kariouk said. This is their way of honouring their hardworking grandmothers.

The cabin is built with 95 per cent timber, with the rest constructed from glass, steel, and concrete. A 60-foot-tall steel beam on a concrete foundation holds up the far end of the cabin, and a steel walkway leads to the front door. It boasts living and dining areas, a kitchen, two bedrooms, and a bathroom. It's solar-powered and heated with a high-efficiency wood stove.

"The reason I bought the land is because it's off-grid," Kariouk said.



The 950-square-foot cabin sits 60 feet above the steeply sloped terrain. Photo courtesy Scott Norsworthy

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He described it as a “home to small and smartly built” homes.

Despite it being a three-season cabin, Kariouk, Gioventu, and their 160 pound Leonberger, Jethrow, trek in with supplies along the unplowed road during the winter to enjoy the peaceful place.

“The quietness appeals to me,” he said.

Kariouk sighed and paused when the Low Down asked him how he would describe the cabin. The modern space features an exposed steel mast, playful geometry to balance the structure on the mast, and cross-laminated timber to reduce waste

and the amount of on-site work. “It’s certainly not anything people would call traditional,” he finally said.

Kariouk has been an architect since 1995. He moved to Canada from the United States in 2001. He teaches architecture at Carleton University and owns Ottawa-based Kariouk Architecture. This is the first time his work

has been up for an Ontario Association of Architects 2022 design excellence award.

“It’s super gratifying because this is a labour of love,” Kariouk said. “A lot of winners for this prize are big, fancy houses, but that’s just not me.”

He’s right. His m.o.r.e. cabin is the only finalist that’s in the woods. Most other finalists are large structures in cities such as community centres, art

galleries, and other public buildings. Unfortunately, his cabin wasn’t selected among the eight winners out of the 17 finalists.

Kariouk thanked his building crews that have been working on this project since the first concrete foundation was poured in 2015 to the end of construction in summer 2021. The general contractors were GPL

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In winter, Kariouk and his family have to snowshoe to their cabin, which is off-grid. Photo courtesy Scott Norsworthy



A 60-foot tall steel mast supports the cabin, which is designed in a way to allow for a 25-foot cantilever. Photo courtesy Scott Norsworthy





Floor-to-ceiling windows wrap around the dining and living areas of the m.o.r.e. cabin, offering a panoramic view of the nearby lake. Photo courtesy Scott Norsworthy

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Construction in Gatineau with the help of a crew from Laverty Log Homes near Kitchener. Farrellton-based Ronald O'Connor Construction also helped with the build.

"They were awesome, and they still help us out all the time," Kariouk said about the O'Connor crew. "They were great."

The private lake the cabin looks over is a small community

that's been there for ages. Kariouk thanked them for bringing lunch and beers to the construction workers.

"It's a wonderful group of people," he said.

But most of all, Kariouk thanked his partner, Gioventu, for his help with the decision making and doing the landscaping and interior design.

Read more about the m.o.r.e. cabin on kariouk.com.



"The reason I bought the land is because it's off-grid"
Paul Kariouk



Ottawa-based architect and professor Paul Kariouk designed and owns the m.o.r.e. cabin near Wakefield. He shares it with his partner Tony Gioventu and their Leonberger, Jethrow. Photo courtesy Paul Kariouk

Kariouk says he is drawn to difficult building sites. "It's a creative challenge." Photo courtesy Scott Norsworthy

