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Experimenta 99

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Experimenta



Kariouk Architects and an unexpected architectural volume in the forests of Ontario



956 m2 where the mix of materials and shapes are everything

Kariouk Architects, the Canadian practice owned by Paul Kariouk, designs a monumental private residence where the mix of materials, textures, shapes and influences are everything.

This is *Forest Retreat*, a second home located in the forests of Caledon, a paradisiacal Canadian town on the outskirts of Ontario famous for its impressive nature. And it is precisely this circumstance that largely defined the life and personality of the entire project. "Historically, Canadian identity has been defined by our relationship with the land. Fulfilling the client's mandate, the house honours that emotional connection through visual and material harmonization with its surroundings, but also through responsible sourcing of materials and adaptation to the site, as well as energy-saving systems," says Kariouk.

With the ideas and objectives already very clear, a team composed of Chris Davis, Adam Paquette, Joel Tremblay, Mark Meneguzzi and Paul Kariouk at the helm, set about the task of creating an architectural volume that was warm enough to transmit closeness and familiarity but, at the same time, open to its magnificent surroundings and in keeping with the aesthetic avant-garde of the times.

«One of the key design goals was to achieve a contemporary approach to warmth and avoid modernist box forms. The continuous space of the house, with only enclosed bedrooms and bathrooms, is a layout that supports family closeness. The family and parents' areas are on the main level. The children's bedrooms form a single slate-clad volume, suspended 12 metres above the main floor by the ridge beam and accessible by a walkway.»

Of course, the most distinctive aspect of the design is the long, copper-clad, tent-like roof that follows the topography of the site. "A vital technical challenge was the roof structure, which, despite its 60 metres in length, was designed and engineered to appear light. On the entry side of the house, the roof rises like a bird's wing above the garage volume below, sheltering an open-air terrace."

Another highlight of Kariouk and his team's proposal was how they managed to reinterpret the client's mandate of "rusticity" by implementing artisanal craftsmanship rather than trying to imitate an aesthetic emerging from a pre-industrial era. "Contemporary construction is very much intertwined with heavy technology and mass-produced components, however, this project shows how craftsmanship can still be expressed."

Thus, by incorporating significant use of exposed steel fittings fabricated by local craftsmen, and custom-made wall and ceiling panels by local carpenters, including echoes of traditional slate shingle patterns, a unique physiognomy with a defined and original personality was achieved. "The intention here is not to eschew modern construction methods, as some heavy timber post and beam houses might do... it was to bring soul to the house by thinking and working out the details in person and by hand, and not simply on a computer screen."



Forest Retreat, by Kariouk Architects © Scott Norsworthy



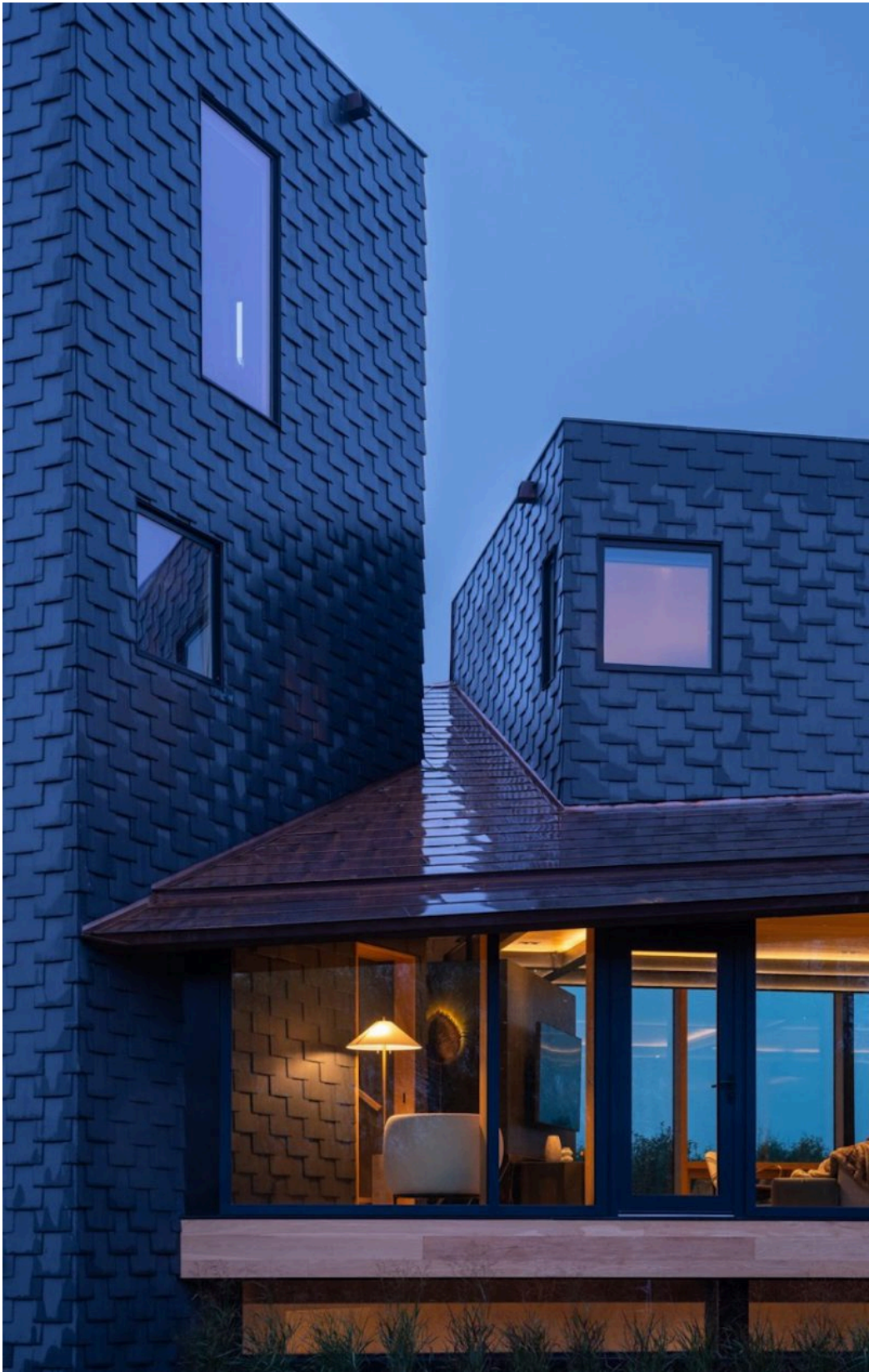
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