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Blurring the Lines

This modern retreat in the Georgia mountains is like a breath of fresh air

Picture it now: tall evergreen trees scraping the blue sky above, the sound of the Toccoa River rushing past your windows, birds chirping and chasing each other around the expansive riverbed, and no neighbors close enough to bother you. Where is this picturesque place? It's certainly not in Atlanta—although it is only a short jaunt away in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

When Atlanta homeowner Dan Kaufman and his wife, Heather, decided to build a second home in the Blue Ridge Mountains, they knew it wasn't going to be your typical rustic log cabin. "I come from an architectural background, and I appreciate raw concrete and modern architecture," Kaufman says. "Not to say that I would have done anything different if I didn't have that background, but

Right: Built in a rustic setting, this home was designed to maximize the expansive views. As guests relax on the elevated Trex deck, they can enjoy the view of the nearby Toccoa River

I've rented log cabins and appreciate the rustic nature, but I don't appreciate the two-by-four-foot windows when you have such beautiful views outside."

Beautiful views may be an understatement. Working with architect Robert Tretsch of Harrison Design Associates, the Kaufmans designed their modern retreat, which they also rent out so others can enjoy the home as much as they do, to capitalize on the views of the Chattahoochee National Forest, which sits directly across the river from their property. Because the property is on a small sliver of land between the road and the river, a skinny and tall structure was the obvious choice—perfect for a modern home.

The home itself is only about 19 feet wide, but boasts more than 1,000 square feet of glass, making the house





feel much more expansive. Adding to the grandeur is the fact that the home is built on a concrete pedestal (due to flood-level requirements), and the extra elevation makes the home feel like a grown-up treehouse. "If you sit back in the living room, it's like you're sitting in an infinity-edge pool because the foreground gets so collapsed it looks like the edge of the glass is right on the water," Tretsch says.

Since the project was almost 100 miles away from Atlanta, one might think that the distance would hinder the building process. This was not the case. Combining Kaufman and Tretsch's architectural backgrounds with the expertise of builder Juan Ramirez, president of Studio D+C, the three men comprised the ultimate team. "This project couldn't have been built in this manner if it wasn't for the collaborative effort that the three of us bring," Kaufman says. "All of us have an architectural background, so if any detail was incomplete, one of us completed it."

While the home had to be set 50 feet away from the river, the roof of the home extends almost 6 feet over the edge of the house. This was



Above: Punches of color throughout the home infuse the space with a modern vibe. The transparent La Marie chair from Kartell is accented by silver Fuego fireplace tools and a mid-century Vladimir Kagan-inspired side table.

Left: Adding to the design are several elements, such as the red accent wall and concrete shelves. William Coleman Mills' "Quilts of Gees Bend" artwork also dresses up the nook.



Above: The cast-concrete fireplace is the focal point in this room, but it may compete with the beautiful view from outside. Even though the Kaufmans are miles away from the hustle and bustle of Atlanta, their rustic retreat is not complete without a Pioneer plasma TV.

Right: This rustic retreat has many of the modern conveniences of a big-city home: stainless-steel GE appliances, IKEA cabinets and custom-made concrete countertops.



domicile



Left: The two-story dining space features floor-to-ceiling windows, and the dining table looks out to the rushing river below. A Mies van der Rohe Barcelona lounge chair, a staple in any modern dwelling, beckons guests to enjoy the view.

Bottom left: A 31-foot-long Trex deck adds more living space and features almost 360-degree views from the Dynasty Spas hot tub. Galvanized steel railings are reinforced with steel cables.

Bottom right: One of the main features of this home is the way the indoors and the outdoors practically blend together. By installing a 10-by-16-foot glass-paneled garage door in the dining room, the Kaufmans can essentially extend their living space even more. The door can even remain open during inclement weather because a roof overhang keeps rain from entering the home.

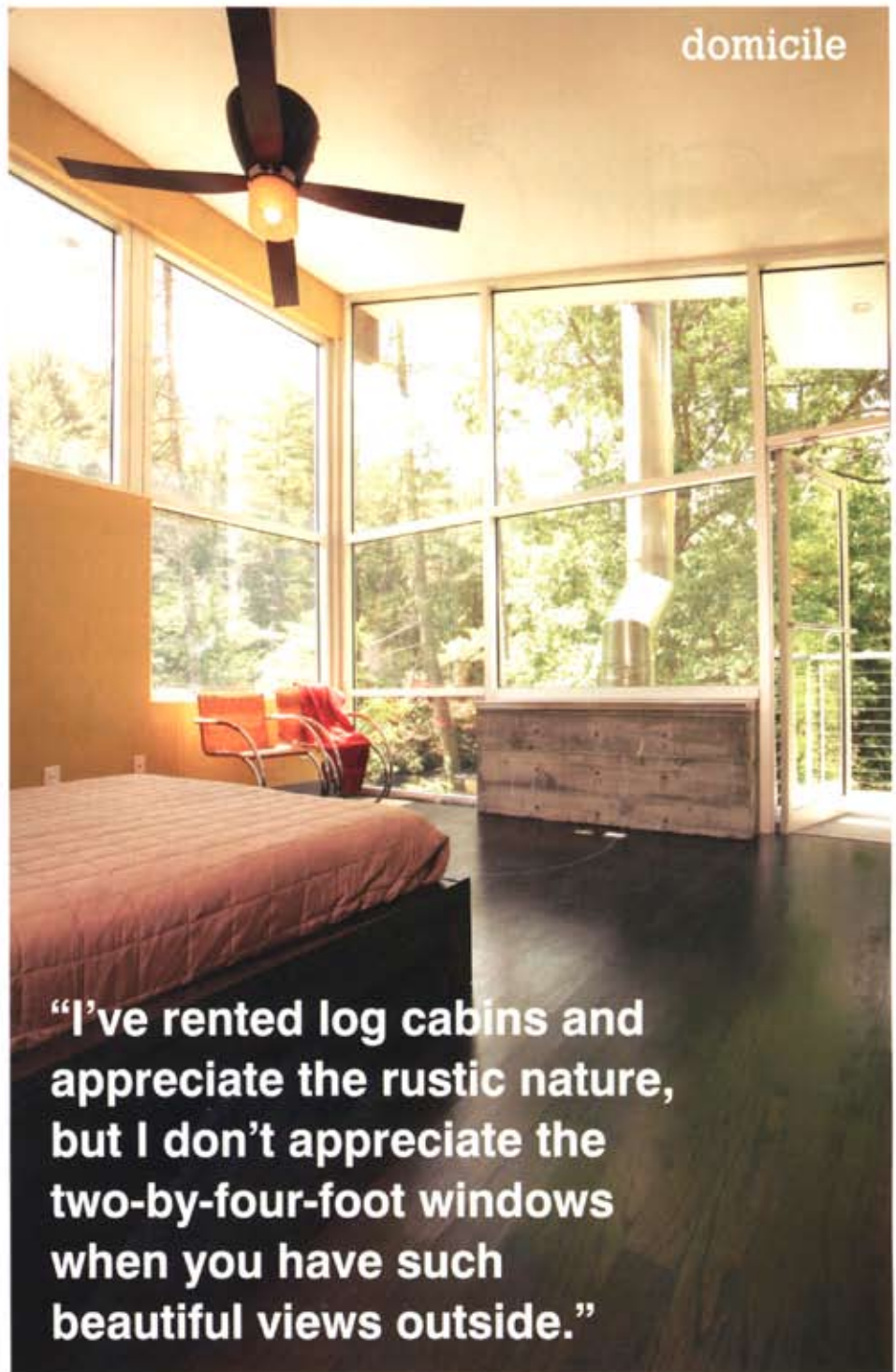




intentional, not only from a modern design standpoint, but also to act as a noise buffer. "It takes the noise from the river, and brings that up," Ramirez says. "When we were working there, we could hear the wind coming down the canyon of the river. It's completely surreal."

The view from almost anywhere in the home also is surreal. Because the house sits directly across the river from a protected forest, there will never be another home there to obstruct the view. "It's striking, the contrast between the Chattahoochee National Forest and this modern iconographic piece sitting in the middle of all that," Tretsch says. "A lot of the interest lies in that contrast."

Aside from the expansive windows, there are several design elements that bring the outdoors inside, and vice versa. The wood-burning fireplace, complete with a concrete façade, has a stainless-steel door in the back that opens up so that those enjoying the fresh air on the deck also can enjoy a roaring fire. The dining room features a 10-by-16-foot garage door that opens up to let the natural light and beauty of the mountains filter inside. "There's a lot of blurring between inside and outside because of all the glass," Tretsch says. "And it's a literal blurring when you can actually open one of the walls." —LAUREN HOFFMAN



"I've rented log cabins and appreciate the rustic nature, but I don't appreciate the two-by-four-foot windows when you have such beautiful views outside."

Left: A rich ebony stain on the oak floors creates a stark contrast with the natural light that filters into the bedroom. Beds and bedding are from IKEA, and the black-and-white framed photos are by Matthew Donovan Lennert. A Hunter Vahalla fan adds a nice touch to the room.

Above: To make sure the view from the bedroom was as unobstructed as possible, Tretsch designed the concrete chimney to come through the second floor, but not to reach the height of the ceiling. A Juliet balcony allows guests to take in the wooded view from the second floor.