



A design team
conceives a
bold, modern
dwelling on
Virginia's Lake
Barcroft

LAKEFRONT IDYLL

Text by JULIE SANDERS | Photography by ANICE HOACHLANDER



Previous spread: Clad in mahogany, shou sugi ban and fiber-cement board, the home angles into a slope above the lake. In the living area (opposite), a Minotti sofa and Ethnicraft nesting tables beckon. Horizontal mahogany panels beside the staircase visually connect the main floor to the upstairs foyer. The dining area (above), with its panoramic view, showcases a Gabriel Scott chandelier above a table and chairs from Poliform.

Scenic Lake Barcroft, a manmade, two-and-a-half-square-mile body of water in Falls Church, anchors a community of about 1,000 homes. Unspoken-for properties on its coveted waterfront are few and far between—so when a couple with a yen for lakefront living came across a vacant, one-and-a-half-acre lot for sale along the shore, they grabbed it.

In fact, their vision extended beyond lifestyle and deep into architecture-and-design territory. “We wanted to build an ultra-contemporary house, and we wanted a local architect we could spend time with, to make sure they understood us,” recounts one of the owners, a management consultant whose husband currently stays home with their two young kids. “We also wanted someone with distinction and their own style,” he continues, “to ensure what we’d be getting in terms of quality and design sense.”

Given the requirements, acclaimed modernist Robert Gurney turned out to be the perfect choice. He signed on for the job, which took about five years from conception to its completion in November 2020. He assembled a team that included colleague Nicole de Jong as project architect; Potomac Valley Builders; Vincent Sagart

of Poliform | sagartstudio as kitchen designer; interior designer Therese Baron Gurney; and landscape architect Kevin Campion.

The lot is enviably positioned with lake views in two directions. Waterfront-lot regulations “allowed us to build within 50 feet of the water,” Gurney notes, “so I designed the house to literally wrap around the site following the 50-foot setback lines.”

At 7,000 square feet, the completed six-bedroom, six-bath dwelling is angled to capitalize on both vistas. It harmonizes expanses of steel, glass and wood in two three-story volumes that tuck into the steeply sloped site, concealing its mass. “While the slope was a challenge, it makes for a more interesting building,” Gurney comments. “But it meant you couldn’t enter on the living level, you’d have to walk down to it.”

Architecture: Robert M. Gurney, FAIA, principal; Nicole de Jong, AIA, project architect, Robert M. Gurney, FAIA Architect, Washington, DC. Interior Design: Therese Baron Gurney, ASID, Baron Gurney Interiors, Washington, DC. Kitchen Design: Vincent Sagart, Poliform | sagartstudio, Washington, DC. Builder: Daryl Landis, Potomac Valley Builders, Bethesda, Maryland. Landscape Architect: Kevin Campion, ASLA, principal; Lindsey Tabor, PLA, associate, Campion Hruby Landscape Architects, Annapolis, Maryland. Landscape Installation: Evergro Landscaping, Glenn Dale, Maryland.



Clockwise from above: Clerestory windows on the front façade admit light while ensuring privacy. From the dining area, the Poliform kitchen is visible beyond the floating stair. The island combines an oak seating area with thin-slab engineered stone atop pale-gray cabinetry. A third-floor ipe deck with a shou sugi ban wall is accessed via sliding-glass doors. The main-floor deck, also made of ipe, enjoys views of the lake.





“Everything is composed mindfully. The house doesn’t feel that big because it lives so well.” —Robert M. Gurney

Nearly every room faces the water and the lake is visible immediately from the entry. The front door opens into a second-floor foyer with a staircase to the third floor and a separate, floating stair of painted steel and white oak down to the main level. “We made sure the different levels communicate,” Gurney says. “There are sightlines pulled from different orientations.”

An open plan was a must. “We had an idea of how things should flow,” says the owner. “We wanted the living room connected to the dining room but distinguished from it. The central stair, which bisects the spaces, gives just enough separation.”

Along the back wall of the living area, a sleek kitchen complements the space, with a fully loaded prep kitchen around the corner. “The goal was to integrate the kitchen with the architecture,” explains designer Vincent Sagart. “It helps create the space—but it’s all about the views.”

The second floor does double duty as front entry—complete with mudroom and two-car garage (an engineering feat in its location over the kitchen)—and guest quarters. There are two spare bedrooms as well as an apartment with a full kitchen, also designed by Poliform | sagartstudio. The third level is for family: The kids’ bedrooms line a short hall, with the primary suite above the guest apartment and a family lounge that the owners call “the loft.” An ipe deck is accessed from the children’s rooms, hallway and loft, creating indoor-outdoor flow.

On the main level, the living area opens out to an expansive ipe deck with a wide stair bordered by Corten steel leading down to the backyard. Landscape architect Kevin Campion devised access from there to the water while thoughtfully balancing other objectives. “It was a sensitive slope with drainage issues, dead trees and restrictions that required preserving and restoring woodland,” he relates. “We took down the dead trees and planted dozens of natives. And we moved the water around the house, managing the drainage so it doesn’t dump into the lake.” Pervious lawn stairs create a picturesque path to 250 feet of lakefront, where the owners dock a pontoon boat for tooling around on the water. A layered plant palette along the slope provides year-round color and interest and prevents erosion.

Clockwise from above: A ground-floor lounge on the side of the house affords walk-out access to the yard; the room was furnished by Brian Fell of Roche Bobois with Dolphin armchairs that take in the view.

To the left of the residence, a 23-foot-tall tower of slatted mahogany partially cantilevers over the sloped site, creating a protected perch for enjoying the views and watching the kids play in the front yard.

A misty morning on Lake Barcroft. A view of the house from behind; windows and doors throughout the home are by Western Window Systems.





The third-floor primary bedroom (above) cantilevers over the side of the house; a Rodolfo Dordoni bed faces chairs designed by Jean-Marie Massaud; the furnishings were purchased through Poliform. A Lievore Altherr soaking tub is a focal point in the primary bath (below and opposite), where water-jet-cut Saint Henry black granite clads the vanity wall.

With the living spaces all facing the water, Gurney tucked the prep kitchen, storage, and operating systems such as HVAC, geothermal and Lutron and A/V on the street side of the house. Spray-foam insulation, low-E glass and passive glazing contribute to energy efficiency. According to the homeowners, solar panels are imminent.

When it came to the interiors, the clients also knew exactly what they wanted. They purchased major furniture pieces themselves, then relied on interior designer Therese Baron Gurney, Robert's wife and a frequent collaborator, "to pull it all together and give it that extra something," explains the owner. Against a backdrop of glass, polished concrete floors and wall panels of mahogany and shou sugi ban, low-slung, modern furnishings in quiet, neutral colors keep the views center stage. Says the owner, "I feel like I'm at a resort when I get home at night. Washington is just 20 minutes away—and I get to come home to this." ■

SOURCES OF NOTE

Home Automation: gramophone.com. Lounge Sofas & Chairs: roche-bobois.com. Dining Room Table & Chairs and Primary Bedroom Furniture: poliformdc.com. Living Room Sofa: minotti.com. Living Room & Lounge Rugs: cavancarpets.com. Bathroom Cabinetry, Fixtures & Faucets: konstunion.com. Kitchen Appliances: miele.com, subzero-wolf.com. For a complete list of resources, see homeanddesign.com.

