

TWIN CITIES

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JASON DERUSHA'S
REFRIGERATOR



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design ideas from the city's most creative minds

LAMPS! WATCHES! BACON!

HOW (& WHERE) TO ORDER DIM SUM

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Clockwise from upper left: the modernist design of Kerrik Wessel; a kitchen in a Wessel-designed home; a City Desk-designed cabin in Knife River, Minn.; more Wessel. Opposite page: an exterior shot of City Desk's Knife River cabin.

RESIDENT EXPERTS

Three fledgling architect firms to watch.

Each decade, the Twin Cities residential architecture scene produces fresh batches of rosy-cheeked designers with their eyes peering to the heavens and their stomachs lined in stainless steel. Many have talent, some have luck and few have both. Those that make it have the skills, creativity and business savvy that are not only essential to the practice of architecture, but can help shape and influence the way we build our houses, and the way we live for generations to come. That said, let's check in on Minnesota's budding architectural trendsetters.

WESSEL DESIGN

A throwback design talent—drawing by hand, making models by hand and often building his designs with his own hands—Kerrick Wessel comes across as a man none too impressed by technological advances. Although in his mid-40s and happily married, his persona is easily compared to Garrison Keillor's Norwegian bachelor farmer. He's taciturn, unflappable and practical in his clothing options.

Appearances, however, betray the fresh novelty of Wessel Design, founded in 2002. While Wessel's houses are crafted out of conventional and familiar materials—wood, stone, glass, concrete—they are applied over a modernist vocabulary of horizontal planes, clean lines and open spaces. Wessel is especially apt at integrating his structures into natural settings, often setting his designs effortlessly into hillsides.

One of his first houses, which he designed and built as a speculative endeavor in St. Croix, Wisconsin, is a paramount (and AIA Minnesota award-winning) example of his work. Here, the house and carport are set at 90-degree angles to each other at the crest of a hill, the house launching out into the leafy canopy of the forest, and the ensemble held together by exterior walkways wrapped in a horizontal screen of woody planks. For a guy who looks like he could have been a lumberjack in another era, Wessel's work is arrestingly humane, refined and very welcome in the 21st century.

CITY DESK STUDIO

Founding their Minneapolis-based firm in 2004, Ben Awes, Christian Dean and Bob Ganser have created the area's latest archetypal "dude firm." Having met in graduate school at the University of Minnesota, the trio spent several years cutting their teeth at the best firms in town before reassembling their talents as City Desk Studio. In a fit of renegade entrepreneurialism, they quickly made news after buying a discarded downtown skyway, and then set about pitching re-use ideas to a curious public. Dude!

Their media exposure exploded when Christian Dean's addition to his own house garnered a trove of local design awards, and made the cover of *Dwell* magazine. The existing story-and-a-half, shingle-clad colonial house was, at best, forgettably ordinary. But with its new, flat-roofed and low-slung kitchen, and bedroom wings connected to the rear (ornamented with a shotgun pattern of tiny, shingle-sized windows) the house became an instant standout. More recent work on the

PHOTO: COURTESY OF WESSEL DESIGN AND CITY DESK STUDIO



home front is equally brazen: a cabin in Knife River, Minnesota, with an undulating plywood ceiling; a Saint Paul home on a quiet residential street with a curved metal roof inspired by utility farm structures. For client's seeking out-of-the-box solutions, or in need of a gently used skyway, these are the guys to call.

SILVER COCOON

Young and shiny as a pair of newly minted pennies, Silver Cocoon was forged in Duluth in 2001 by married couple Souliyahn Keobounpheng and Tia Salmela. Arguably, the third partner of this interdisciplinary design studio is their namesake Airstream Trailer. Serving first as a gallery for handmade art and high design crafts, the trailer was later appropriated as the duo's architecture studio. Mercurial in their lives and their design pursuits, the Salmela-Keobounphengs moved Silver Cocoon to north Minneapolis in 2003, and broadened their range of services to encompass residential architecture, in-

terior design and jewelry and product design.

On the home design side of the practice, Silver Cocoon's portfolio contains a sparse but growing collection of provocative design work. A taut, brick-gable-roofed carriage house in Saint Paul is both minimalist box and charged cultural icon. And a hillside home in Duluth would seem highly conventional if it weren't for the oversized and off-center square window staring bug-eyed from above a white slatted front porch. Steeped in the residential vernacular of the Midwest (Tia's father is the North Shore home guru David Salmela), Silver Cocoon's house designs take straightforward architectural forms and invest them with their unique brand of whimsy, experimentation and joy of craft. +

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