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ARMCHAIR TOUR

# A home of his own design

By: Anne Moore

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When Chicago architect Jeffrey Goulette was tasked with designing a country retreat for himself and his wife, he combined the simple forms found in New England Shaker homes with the spread of outbuildings on traditional Midwestern farms to create a linked-pavilion house that crowns a Michigan hillside.

“The challenge was how to assemble the house,” Mr. Goulette says. “We wanted it to ramble across the hilltop.” Mr. Goulette and his wife, Kelly McGrail, who works in corporate communications, had been looking for property in Harbor Country on and off for several years. From her parents' Michiana home, the two explored a widening circle. When they reached the rolling hills and forests of Buchanan a few miles inland, the search ended with their purchase, in 2005, of a five-acre pasture beside a 20-acre private wood.

To get the siting right, the couple sat on that hill for hours at a time, at different times of the year. They named the house “Firefly Hill” because one summer evening they found themselves surrounded by illuminated insects.

summer home tours



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The 3,500-square-foot house is wood frame with cedar shake and clapboard siding, roofed with galvanized aluminum. "We tried to be as green as possible," says Mr. Goulette, a principal at Sullivan Goulette & Wilson Architects in River North. He installed a geothermal heating system and situated parts of the home to maximize shade or sun. The house is one room deep, allowing views and breeze from both sides.

"It's what I love most about the house," Ms. McGrail says. "From every single room I have a spectacular and really different view. I see fields and woods and deer. I'm surprised every time I look out the window."

The couple uses the house year-round. Ms. McGrail shares a horse and rides in the area. A neighbor provides access to the private woods for hiking and snowshoeing. Fresh eggs come from another neighbor who keeps chickens.

"The house came together naturally," Mr. Goulette says. "It feels like mine, like ours, it's our design. When I do this for others I lose it, it's gone, a house I have cherished. This one I don't have to give up."



The barrel-vaulted screened porch is a nod to the playroom in Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park home and studio.

