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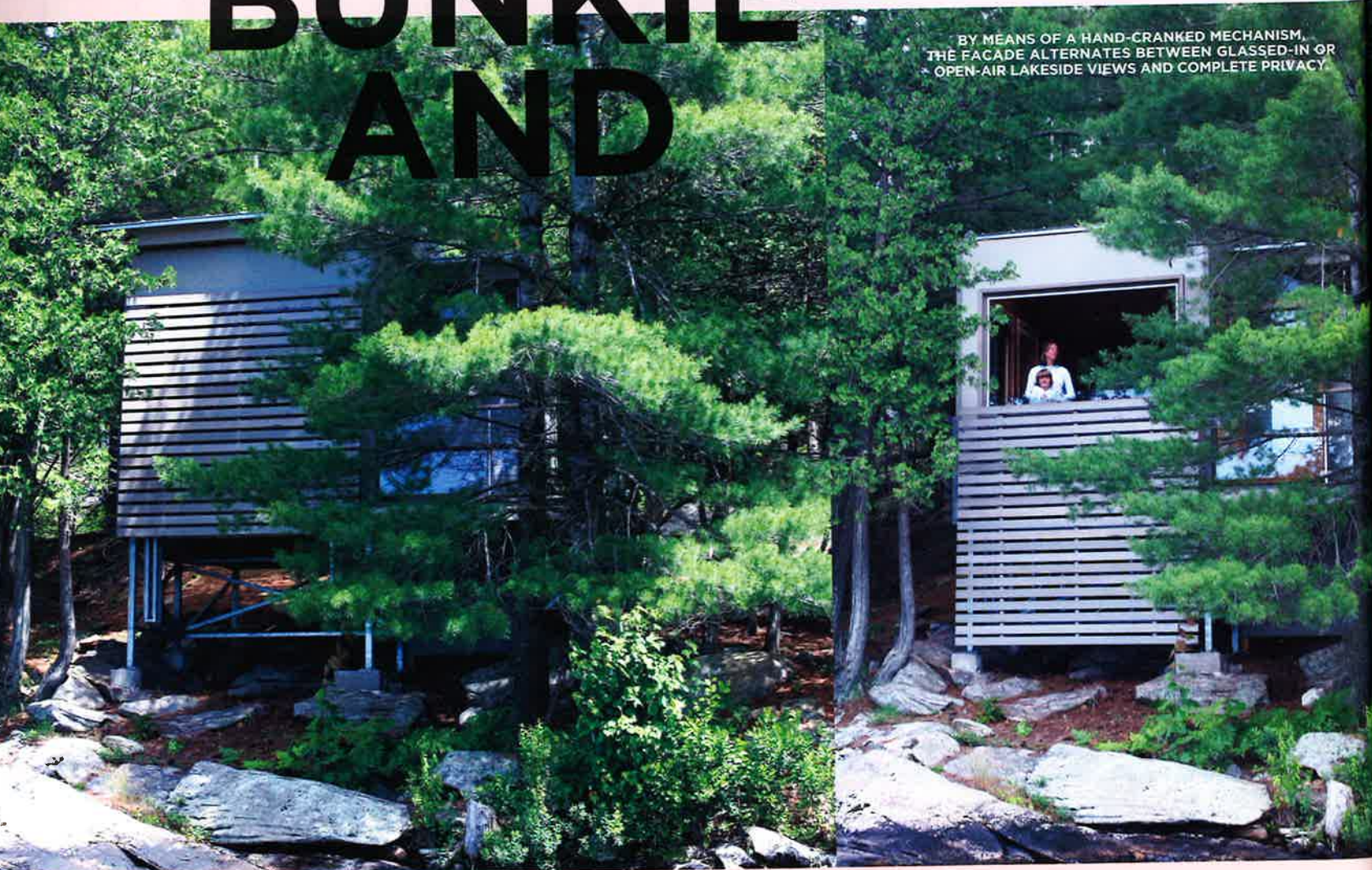
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# BUNKIE AND

BY MEANS OF A HAND-CRANKED MECHANISM, THE FACADE ALTERNATES BETWEEN GLASSED-IN OR OPEN-AIR LAKESIDE VIEWS AND COMPLETE PRIVACY



# BEYOND

IN ONTARIO'S MUSKOKA LAKES DISTRICT, MCCORMACK ARCHITECTS MECHANIZES WINDOWS AND FLOORS, TRANSFORMING A RUSTIC OUTBUILDING INTO A SUPERHERO OF A SLEEPING CABIN

BY ALEX BOZIKOVIC

Up in Muskoka, people like to think they're roughing it. Families who summer in Ontario's affluent lakes district make it a traditional point of pride to keep things rustic – if only to retain a rough veneer on their massive cottages-cum-castles. But for a guest house completed in 2009 by Toronto's Christopher McCormack, design was driven by a genuinely modest ideal. "I had a vision of the old VW camper van – a vehicle that opened up and became a place where a family could sleep," says the architect.

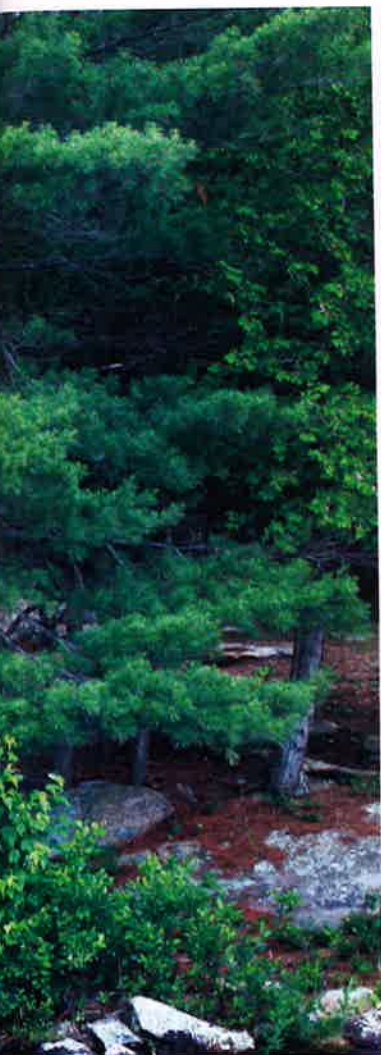
Barely bigger than one of those classic vehicles, McCormack's 15-square-metre cabin on Lake Rosseau is nonetheless a surprisingly commodious space, offering a bedroom with a sitting area, a wet-style bathroom, and a surfeit of light, views and air. The trick is in a VW-like series of moving parts that can be adjusted to push out the space and invite nature in.

When McCormack's client purchased the property in 2005, the main house was livable, but the guest house – a type known locally as a sleeping cabin or bunkie – was a mess. "It was a shed, really, that was pretty

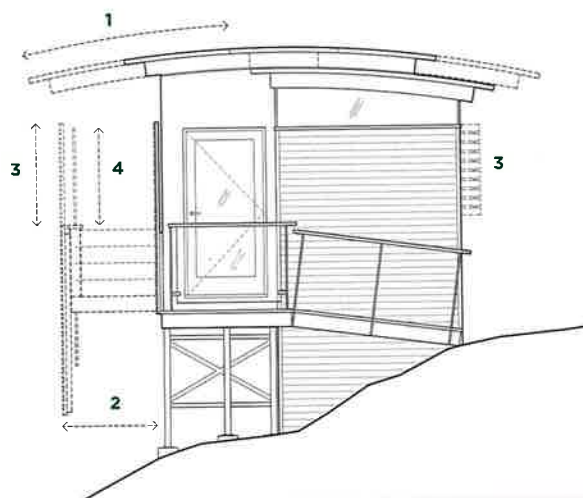
deteriorated, and it had a post in the middle, so you couldn't fit a proper bed," says McCormack. But the site was an asset. Today's zoning rules keep new buildings 20 metres back from the lake, but this mid-century cabin was just three metres from the water's edge. McCormack figured he could build on the original footprint, out of deference to the zoning, but stretch the limits of renovation for an entirely new structure. He presented a challenge to the client to build "something that opened up more to the lake."

The project mechanizes five portions of the cabin to open it up, literally, to the surrounding forest. One section of moving floor, which holds chairs and a side table, slides out toward the lake. Outside, two screens of wooden slats slide into place, adding privacy and shade while maintaining a degree of forest and lake view. The lake-facing window also retracts, its 1.5-by-2.5-metre expanse lowering like a giant car window; and on top, a portion of the roof slides open, to serve as a skylight while shading the lakefront half of the building.





LIKE THE OLD BUNKIE, THE NEW ONE SITS ON STILTS, WHICH ALLOWS RAINWATER TO BE DIRECTED DOWN TO THE LAKE.



- 1 CONVERTIBLE ROOF
- 2 MOVING FLOOR/DECK
- 3 PRIVACY SCREEN
- 4 RETRACTABLE WINDOW



THE MOVING FLOOR SLIDES OUT TO CREATE AN OPEN-AIR SITTING AREA.

As with a camper van, you have to crank open the roof yourself. None of these parts are motorized; all the mechanics, hidden within the walls and the roof, are driven by hand-cranked hardware. This helps the occupants forge a connection with the surrounding landscape, and yet retain just as much privacy as they want, to the centimetre.

Given the small-scale project's relative complexity, McCormack says it's somewhere between a piece of furniture and a building. Working with fabricator Alex Bak of Space Furniture and structural engineer Stephen Hamann, he built the bunkie in quasi-prefab fashion in a shop in Toronto. Which means it could serve as a prototype for others like it: McCormack is kicking around the idea of similar cabins with slightly different sets of parts, each ready to hit the road to a shore near you. **AZ**