

# Artful Living

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# Constructing Heritage

Architect Andrea Swan designs a Mississippi River retreat.

| BY MARGUERITE HAPPE

“Until 2012, we lived in a comfortable 1961 rambler on the Mississippi River,” says Andrea Swan, founder of boutique architecture firm Swan Architecture. “When we had our first daughter, Emilia, we remodeled to create space, and life was good.” All was well until the family found out they were expecting once again — and that this time city codes wouldn’t allow them to add on another bedroom due to floodplain regulations. When they found a house in the same area ripe for teardown on 2.5 acres with 300 feet of shoreline, the Swans knew it was the perfect spot to design and build their own home. Heritage and tradition guided Swan’s design process: “This house is really just about my family and me,” she explains. “At the end of the day, does it make you live easier? Does it make you inspired to be better, and do better, every day?” Her drive to continuously grow is partly inspired by her identity as a first-generation child of Eastern European immigrants. After fleeing their native Slovakia in 1969, her parents worked hard to create a new life for their family in Minnesota. Today, three flags fly in front of the Swan household: A Slovak flag to pay homage to her heritage, a Swedish flag to honor her husband’s family tree and an American flag to celebrate their nationality, town and new home.





Other details from the designer's European past are found throughout the home. Clean lines and the military-esque façade are pulled from architecture prevalent in the Swiss Alps. While the exterior feels reminiscent of a Bavarian embassy, the interior offers a calming, soothing retreat.

Countertops from Amsum & Ash complete what Swan calls the most important room in the house: the main kitchen. "We didn't opt for an isolated dining room or living room, because I find that most people enjoy spending time in the kitchen, where the action occurs," she explains. "Formal appendages aren't used as often anymore, and with a simple, symmetrical home design, the kitchen can become the nucleus."

Massive windows with stunning river views are the result of a collaboration with Kolbe Windows & Doors, a relationship that Swan values immensely: "I wanted to work with a window company that could truly fulfill our quality and aesthetic needs," she says. "With any questions, even about the smallest detail, the Kolbe staff was invaluable in matching exactly what I was looking for. I called them regularly throughout the design process, and they went above and beyond to answer any question or make any adjustment."

"This house isn't a showcase home for Swan Architecture; it wasn't built to generate work," she adds. "It's personal to me. It's a celebration of what's truly important: my family, our passions and my background." **AL**