

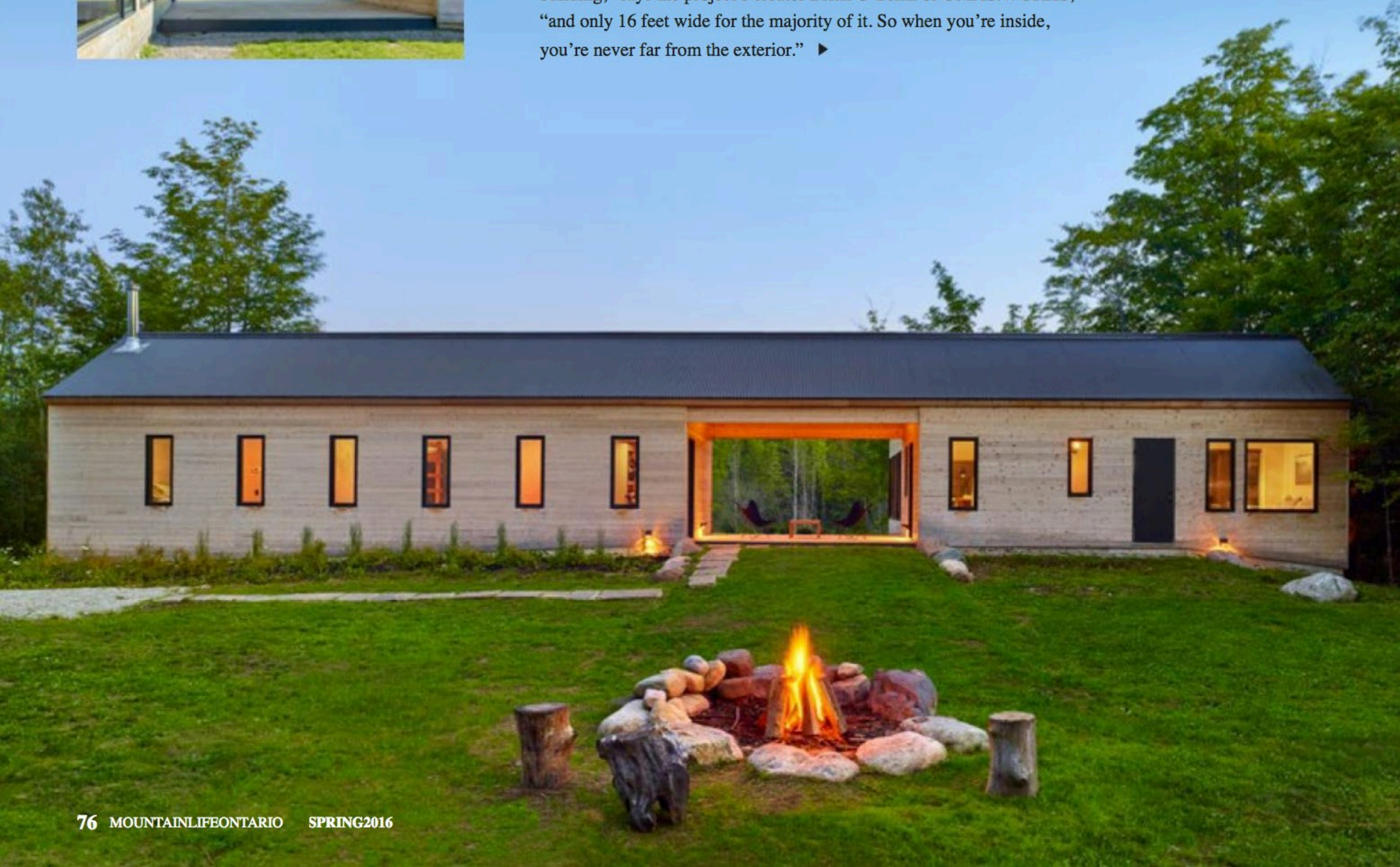
COOLBREEZEWAY

THIS “DOGTROT” CABIN IS FAITHFUL TO ITS CENTURY-OLD SOUTHEASTERN U.S. PEDIGREE BUT FITS IDEALLY INTO ITS RURAL ONTARIO BACKDROP

Words by Ned Morgan & Photography by Shai Gil

This year-round cottage near Meaford brings a surprising architectural pedigree to a secluded rural Ontario setting. With its central breezeway connecting the two building volumes, this is an often-overlooked piece of American vernacular architecture known as a “dogtrot”, named for late 19th and early 20th century wooden cabins found predominantly in the southeastern United States.

The dogtrot or breezeway is in effect an outdoor living room dividing the sleeping area of the home from the living area. The home has a utilitarian feel but is never cold or unwelcoming, partly because the design allows for intimate engagement with the lot, which contains a wetland, a ravine, and a pond (the latter complete with a wood-fired sauna and adjoining relaxation room mirroring the dogtrot style of the home). This proximity to nature is largely the result of the long, slim building footprint. “It’s a 90-foot-long building,” says the project’s creator Brian O’Brian of OMAS:WORKS, “and only 16 feet wide for the majority of it. So when you’re inside, you’re never far from the exterior.” ▶





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The interior/exterior confluence is highlighted by the paneling of plain untreated birch plywood, an unconventional move inspired by the owners’ desire for a low-maintenance interior and further confirmed, says O’Brian, by a friend’s opinion that “a cottage is a place where you should be able to throw a hatchet in the wall.” And yet the overall effect of the wall finish is anything but rough-hewn, instead channelling a clean-lined northern European hut aesthetic. The unbevelled cedar siding and corrugated metal roof reinforce those clean lines on the exterior. ▶





The owners have been staying on the land with their young children for years, initially in a bunky. “The land has a huge history for this couple,” O’Brian adds. “This is where he proposed to her. They’ve wanted to build here for years and finally were able to. The fire pit was always here and we used that as a visual launch-point for organizing the dogtrot. And today they can still sit around their original fire pit.” 

Architect: omasworks.com

Photography: shaigil.com