

DULUTH TIMBER COMPANY

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DESIGNER SHOWCASE

House Dog Carpentry favors cozy, interstitial spaces, where less is more

House Dog Carpentry, Joey Kenig, owner
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In this time of doing more with less—and of doing something with nothing—we look to those hearty northern folk who have been living on the margins just about forever. Up where even potatoes won't grow, where work is cobbled together between spouses and seasons, craftsmen like Joey Kenig are doing amazing work.

Building custom homes in the Ely, MN area, Kenig's House Dog Carpentry crew has worked together for over 15 years, one project at a time. The company is named in honor of a retired sled dog.

House Dog's motto: "We're old, but we're slow."

House Dog uses rich detail (and our reclaimed Douglas fir) to claim hidden and transitory spaces



As he does with prospective clients, Kenig led a recent tour of six remote cabins and homes in the Ely area, each sited on idyllic bedrock outcroppings with wild lake views. Several were collaborations with timber framer Jeff Kemmer. In addition to Duluth Timber's big wood, Kenig pointed to the finer details of millwork in stair systems and paneling.

"I choose reclaimed wood for a lot of reasons, but first, I like it because of its dimensional

stability," Kenig explained. "When we use it for anything that might move, it's very reliable. We try to do a careful job of joinery. If we use something too green, it'll open up."

Favoring the satin feel of wood, House Dog usually finishes interior details with Watco oil, and uses varnish selectively where a harder shell is required.

A family's wear and tear only brings out more of the wood's fine character, under hand and under



Staircase and timber work by Jeff Kemmer

> House Dog
continued...



T&G Douglas fir with one-inch exposure adds corduroy texture to curved entry wall of master bedroom

>House Dog ...continued

foot. Kenig can name all the children who inhabit his homes, many of whom have special play rooms thanks to his crew's knack for making the most of ceiling spaces.

"The choice to use reclaimed wood is entirely budget-dependent. Most people really like the material. They love the historical value of it, love to know—if they can—where the wood comes from."

He went on to describe the recent glee of his current clients when learned their wood comes from a Jolly Time Popcorn plant. For Kenig, the fine grain and past-life character of reclaimed wood also helps sell the product.

"I talk about the inherent beauty of the material. I guess as I grow older, I appreciate things that get better with age. People can relate to that."

Kenig and his House Dog crew seem destined to continue designing cozy habitats for northern dwellers, places where everybody can come in out of the cold and sit a spell. Good dog!



Kenig favors Douglas fir floors in his projects, adding warmth to northern rooms. Above, reclaimed 2 x 10 ceiling joists, left as is, then heavily sanded and oiled. At right and below, solid mixed-grain Douglas fir flooring, 5" wide. Table of Douglas fir planks.



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