

# Embracing the Seasons

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Omas:Works: Land House,  
Meaford, Ontario, Canada

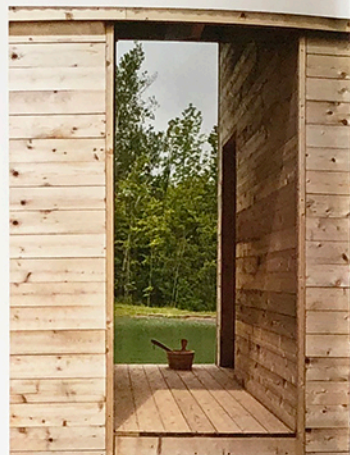


The L-shaped house is sensitively sited in a gap in the trees, looking down over the lake.



**Above** A porch by the main entrance doubles as a wood store; the separate sauna also has a mini breezeway.

**Right and opposite** The living spaces are to one side of the breezeway, and the bedrooms to the other; wood-burning stoves are the principal source of heat.



**D**ogtrot houses are defined by their central breezeways, which form a partially sheltered space at the heart of the building, under the roof but open to the landscape at either side. They are more commonly seen in the southern states of America, where the breezeway helps to cool the house, positioned between a simple living room and kitchen on one side and a bedroom or two on the other. They are not so common in the colder climate of Canada, but Joel and Michelle Loblaw (a landscape and furniture designer respectively) insisted on such a plan for the design of their home in Meaford, Ontario, not far from the shore of Nottawasaga Bay.

'The effect of the dogtrot here is that the owners are constantly forced to engage with the environment, the weather and the landscape as they pass from one part of the house to the other,' says the designer Brian O'Brian of Omas:Works. 'I have been fascinated by dogtrots for years, so the opportunity to build one was very welcome. Beyond that, the key ideas here relate to the sense of being held within a volume while simultaneously being reminded of where you are and your connections to the land.'

The Loblaws bought the property some years ago, and initially camped on the site beside the substantial pond before self-building a simple off-grid 'bunkie', or sleeping cabin. Eventually they decided to commission a new house on the property, which they call 'the Land', to serve as a holiday and weekend home for themselves

and their two young children. 'We've been coming up to the Land for years, and we have raised our kids with this as part of their lives,' they say. 'Brian knew we wanted to live in a way where we would be part of the landscape, and that we wanted to feel truly at home every time we arrive here.'

The single-storey house was designed and built to a modest budget, keeping the environmental sensitivity of the Land – which is in a conservation area – in mind throughout, along with the need for a low-maintenance and hard-wearing retreat. It is clad in tongue-and-groove cedar siding, and roofed with sheets of agricultural steel. Inside, the principal material for walls and ceilings is untreated plywood, and the floors are timber. The living room and kitchen sit at one end of the house, and there are three bedrooms across the breezeway. Joel has also created a series of outdoor rooms, plus a sauna, including a fully functioning outdoor kitchen with wood-fired oven.

Heating is provided by two wood-burning stoves, one in the living room and a second in the master bedroom (there is a third in the old bunkie), while natural cross ventilation is assisted in the summer by the dogtrot plan and opening windows to either side. Water comes from a well on the site, and the house has its own septic treatment system. The house is largely self-sufficient, although there is modest electrical provision from the grid, which is principally and sparingly used for lighting during winter visits.

## Waterside and Coast



**Right** The bedrooms are designed and finished simply, using plywood for the walls and ceilings in combination with timber floors.

**Below** The sauna is in a separate small building by the lake, in a similar style to the main house.

**Opposite** The central breezeway not only draws in fresh air, but also offers a sheltered outdoor room – a hybrid of porch and veranda.

