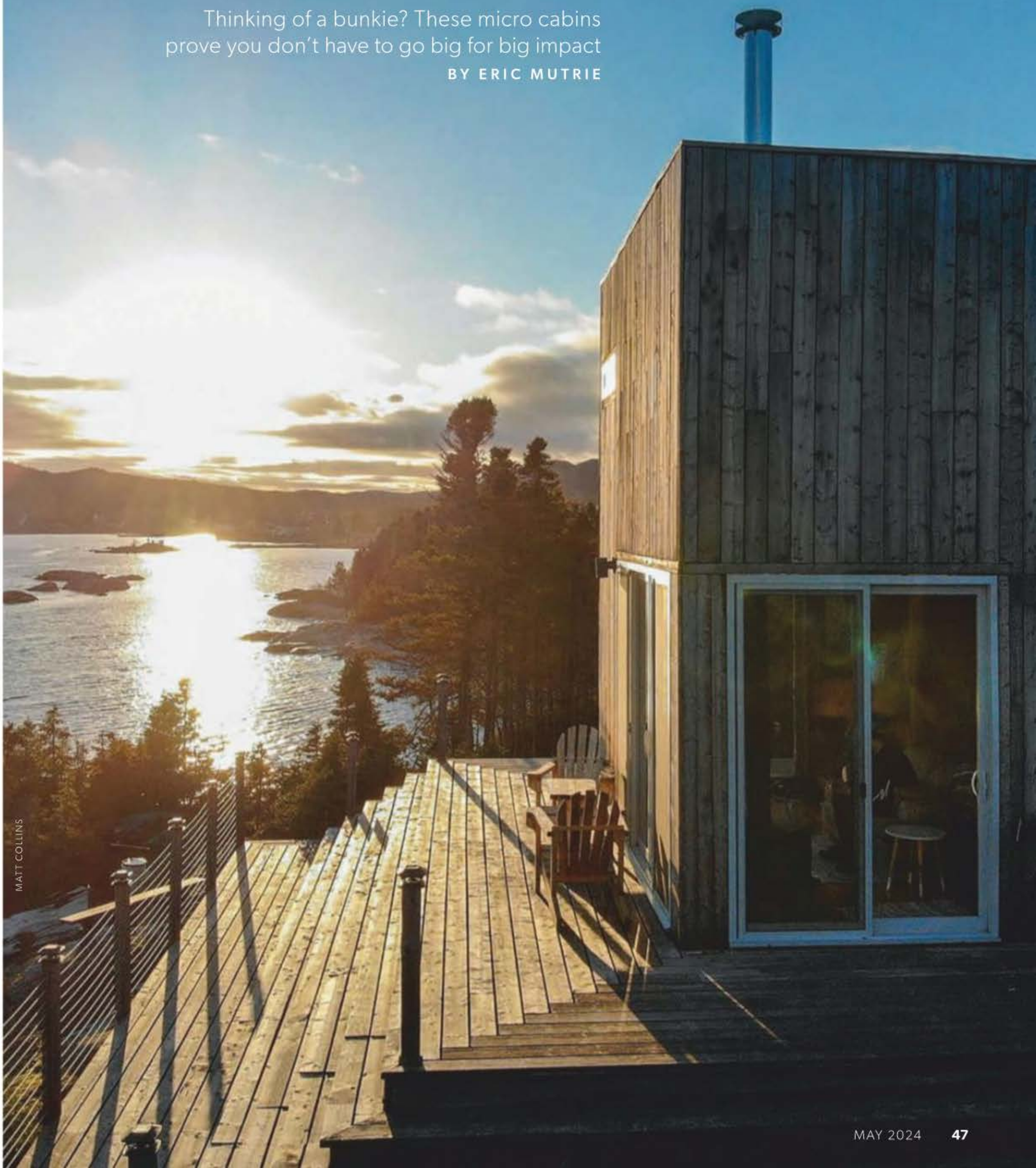


One small box, three ways

Thinking of a bunkie? These micro cabins prove you don't have to go big for big impact

BY ERIC MUTRIE



MATT COLLINS



The floor and the ceiling are made of birch veneer plywood. One of the glazed walls is slightly angled to create enough space in between the main façade and the cedar screen to be able to clean the glass.

Sunset Cabin

When Michael Taylor (a co-founder of Toronto's Taylor Smyth Architects) was approached by his friends to expand their cottage on Lake Simcoe, Ont., it wasn't an addition that they had in mind. Instead, they were looking for somewhere to get away from their getaway. With the buzz of family activity often taking over their main property at night, the couple craved a standalone bunkie that would give them their own secluded sleeping quarters closer to the lake.

Eager not to disturb the landscape, Michael and his firm developed a structure that could be pre-fabricated in Toronto, then shipped to be assembled on-site in just 10 days. Essentially, the 275-sq.-ft. cabin (built in 2004) is a fully insulated glass box wrapped in cedar screens made by Toronto woodworking studio Brothers Dressler in collaboration with Yaan Poldass. The design is Michael's spin on a "primitive hut"—a term coined by Marc-Antoine Laugier, an early architectural philosopher. "He wrote about it as the first form of shelter, which was basically put together with sticks

and was just a place where someone could be protected from the elements," says Michael.

This contemporary version swaps out sticks for cedar slats. The wooden shell gradually reveals more of the water as you walk through the interior, thereby balancing privacy from the main cottage with great sunset views. "The solidity and transparency are juxtaposed," says Michael. At the far end is a sheltered deck complete with an outdoor shower, a sink, and a door to a small outhouse with a chemical toilet.

While the owners initially heated the cabin with a woodstove, they have since converted it to gas to keep it easier to manage in the winter, when they enjoy watching animals out on the ice. Now that the cedar has weathered to a silver grey and the landscape has grown around it, the building blends into its surroundings. The bunkie also has a green roof, which means it stays similarly incognito when you look down at it from the main cottage. "It stands out most at night," says Michael. "It becomes almost like a lantern." >>

THIS PAGE: TOP LEFT: BEN RAHN/AFRAME; TOP RIGHT: THOMAS LEWANDOVSKI; OPPOSITE: THOMAS LEWANDOVSKI



Michael built a model of the cabin before construction to fine-tune the size and spacing of the cut-outs. To go easy on the earth, the structure rests on two steel beams supported by four caissons driven into the ground.