

NOVEMBER 5, 2006

## THIS WEEK

The designs in this issue take the annual preoccupations with staying warm and dry and maximizing natural light indoors to a new level.

Architect Olle Lundberg's sleek, pre-fabricated design in Healdsburg, made of structural foam panels typically used for warehouses, is low-cost and energy-saving.

Landscape designers Marcel Wilson and Jennifer Carroll-Wilson chose to make a stream that bubbles under their Glen Park house each winter into a recurring asset. Their multi-level garden allows the stream to cascade through, and their similarly tiered house, remodeled by architect Andrew Dunbar into a split-level living space with indoor/outdoor rooms, has light streaming in from skylights and lightwells.

In Palo Alto, architect Lindy Small traced the sun's annual path to shape her first from-the-ground-up house in California — an L-shaped, glassy building reticulated with gardens — to let in just enough light all year.

Zahid Sardar

ZAHID SARDAR, DESIGN EDITOR

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A sister to the Palace of Fine Arts' garland ladies stands across the street.



## Bracing for Winter

A low-cost building is well insulated from Sonoma's temperature extremes



Left and above: This two-story Healdsburg house with bedrooms upstairs was prefabricated and then built on site.

An aggressively simple, 5,000-square-foot building on 72 hilly acres in Healdsburg started with a chance encounter three years ago. "I happened to meet my client (a dot-com entrepreneur) at a party for Fred Reid of Virgin America who was an Olympics torch runner" says architect Olle Lundberg. Soon after, attracted by the mention of a low-budget cabin Lundberg had designed for Reid, the man Lundberg met called him. "He wanted to build a country home and to spend very little on it," Lundberg says. However, the architect's first draft would have cost nearly \$350 per square foot — too much in a post-dot-com era. Savvy entrepreneurs such as Lundberg's client understand financial caution.

"I wanted efficiency in the use of space, in construction time and how much it cost," the owner says. "I had been reading a lot about some of the ideas for prefabricated homes."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADRIAN GREGORUTTI

Lundberg and project architect Ben Frombgen sited the building on a spot conveniently flattened by former owners. But, while it helped to shave costs, it was not a compromise. "The site looks down into a canyon to the valley floor," Frombgen says. And its wide views facing east, west and south toward Healdsburg make it ideal. Lundberg devised a cost-effective rectilinear building with few joists or level changes. "We envisioned a simple building and gave him a dressed-up box," Lundberg says.

The "box" is an ecologically efficient, pre-fabricated building with a steel frame in-filled with steel-clad, 5-inch-thick, 40-foot-high foam panels, large windows and a galvanized metal sheathing on the exterior — like fancy car dealerships that use such Butler-type construction systems. "I am a big efficiency fiend," the owner says. "That's why there are no space-wasting hallways inside. We have uninterrupted spans of 60 or 70 feet inside. The large volumes with their 14-foot-high ceilings remind me of

the New York lofts I spent time in as a child."

Nostalgia aside, the owner makes important points. His 2-story home with a horseshoe plan around a double-height living room makes it "a modern barn. When you step away from a traditional house, you discover that commercial structures have solved some tricky problems and standardized them. Standardization brings cost efficiencies," he says. "We could replicate this elsewhere. By the beach or in the flats of Middle America."

Exposed steel inside and out allows the owner and his wife to hang art with magnets, and the heated concrete floors in this rotating gallery promote informal comfort for young and old guests. A canopy that overhangs the front is a glinting shield over a propane fire pit that warms groups gathered inside and out, around an open window. At the same time, the galvanized steel cladding is also practical in fire-prone Sonoma County.

All this was achieved for a little more than \$200 per square foot, because the bulk of the structure

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Left and above: Concrete floors in the public spaces, left, maple wood used upstairs and Home Depot marble tiles in bathrooms are low-cost materials. Tyvek, a moisture-resistant building wrap, is artist Lea Feinstein's canvas for hangings attached to the steel walls with magnets. Architect Olle Lundberg designed the dining chairs and table originally for the Slanted Door restaurant.

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went up in just three weeks, greatly diminishing labor time. Lundberg happily divulges more cost-saving secrets: "The thick foam walls provided as much insulation as a refrigerated warehouse, so we could add a lot of expensive-looking glass," he says. And, the large Fleetwood USA windows are actually sliding glass doors from Collier Warehouse, installed at window height in the 14-foot-high rooms. "We allowed the space to be lavishly lofty because volume does not cost more," he says. "The

structural foam and steel components come in limitless lengths, so a tall wall costs almost the same as a standard, wood-frame, 8-foot module." "Constraints breathe in creativity," the owner adds. "This space is programmed simply, and as we grow older, we will be able to devote spaces to different activities. We cherish that." ♦

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