

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

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BAINBRIDGE ISLAND: Elegant environmentalism

PHINNEY RIDGE: Ker-pow through color

LAKE FOREST PARK: A Midcentury's new modern

QUEEN ANNE HILL: Comfy in cool white

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The entire master suite is encased in glass, expanding the spatial feel of the house with full open views to the forest that is the yard.



"The old entry had a big stone wall and a powder room just to the right of the front door," says architect Nils Finne. "We took all of that out and created this transparency into the house. Having created all that transparency, the door becomes the stopping element. So there's that dense woven design that keeps you from just floating out of the house."

• by rebecca teagarden • photographed by benjamin benschneider

WE LOVE the outdoors. We love the woods," says Greg.

That goes without saying, really. We're standing in deep forest off a long driveway in Lake Forest Park. In a house that is more Midcentury modern cabin it is so nestled among some very old flora on a shy four acres. Walls of glass, glass and more glass giving the home living wallpaper all shades of green. With soil-to-treetop views even from the bathtub.

"A lot of people take their money and buy a vacation house, but we'd rather put it into this house," Greg says. "This property really is a vacation spot anyway."

"When you're coming up that driveway and you hear the birds and see the trees, you go 'ahhhhhhh.' You relax," his wife says.

Ahhhhhh indeed. The couple have been snuggled in here since 1995. Pretty good house already. Walls of glass original. Lots of built-ins. Terrazzo floors. Massive indoor-outdoor fireplace. Open kitchen. Critters for neighbors.

But 1955 was a long time ago, and the Midcentury was no longer all that modern.

"It was a big advantage to live here for a while so we really knew the house," says Greg's wife. "But it was kind of dangerous, too." She refers to the volatile Thermadore oven old enough to be an antique.

The couple was certain their home needed help in a big way. But, they confess, "between us, we didn't have a thread of artistic capability," and were

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With glass,
wood and steel,
a Midcentury
becomes modern
again

IN GREAT DETAIL



Finne calls the remodel "a reinterpretation of the original house: new finishes, new spirit." He kept the main ceiling structure and added large clerestory windows in the monitor.



A 30-foot-long wall clad in custom weathered-steel panels adds an industrial yet artistic feel to the expanse uniting the living spaces. The ceiling here is the original hemlock with fir beams.

IN GREAT DETAIL

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unsure how to go about getting it.

A trip to AIA Seattle later, however, they had found their architect. Nils Finne. And now Greg, filled with new confidence, can tell you that the name of the glass accent tiles in the bathroom is Dinky Dolce from Ann Sacks. That the concrete in the hallway is Milestone. That the walk-in closet door is a Raum.

"When we saw Nils' notebook at the AIA, his photographs were of details," Greg says. "From that we knew he was the guy."


Finne took the home down to its studs, and contractor Schultz Miller built it back up as a crafted contemporary, retaining the spirit and footprint of the original. The floor plan, 2,600 square feet, was reorganized for a master suite surrounded by glass. Removing an ill-placed powder room opened the living room. To repair the floor, Finne interlaced fingers of old and new terrazzo at the entrance. The front door is a Finne design, his fixation on detail made known to all who enter.

Throughout are Finne signature moves uniquely crafted; computer-routed cabinet fronts, 3form resin panels with grass, Finne-designed light fixtures and blackened-steel

valances. The palette is earthy Northwest. But down the center of the home is a 30-foot-long contemporary edge — a wall of weathered-steel panels. Another in a lighted cast-glass kitchen counter. And still another in a glass wall between the master bedroom and bath with a hand-drawn pattern in etched glass. Old built-in storage was beat up. Finne drew up his own, in cherry or resin panels with grasses.

The old house had what would seem to be nice, big skylights. But, in truth, they were always covered in algae and needles. Finne chucked those for a roof monitor with clerestory windows.

Greg and his wife are delighted that their trip down to the local AIA office led to all of this.

"It was a real education," he says. "Nils designed everything right down to the toilet-paper holder. We told him that we don't do a whole lot of adorning these houses with art. The structure is the art." 

Rebecca Teagarden writes about design and architecture for Pacific Northwest magazine. Benjamin Benschneider is a magazine staff photographer.

How to find an architect

AIA Seattle's class for those who want to know how to find an architect and have other questions about residential design is now more user-friendly. The streamlined program is after work, instead of on Saturdays, half the price, \$10 per person/\$15 per couple, and half the time, 90 minutes.

"How to Choose an Architect" also has a new name, "Home Design 101: Getting Started." The seminar offers the basics of design and construction, including budget advice, tips for hiring a contractor, what to expect and how best to work with your designer.

Check out <http://www.aiaseattle.org/find-an-architect> for a database of local firms, a class schedule and other resources.



The master and bath are separated by a glass wall with an etched hand-drawn pattern. The pattern is more dense at the bottom for a sense of privacy. "It was almost like I got out a big marker and drew on the glass," Finne says.