

Custom Home

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The Art and Craft of Custom Home Building / January/February 2011

2011 Custom Builder of the Year

For Jay True and Jim Murphy,
merely good isn't good enough

Plus: The Custom Market Watch





Culinary Craft

A major addition was planned for this dark, claustrophobic 1950s ranch house near Seattle. But when budget forced a choice between square footage and highly crafted interiors, the clients chose the latter. Architect Nils C. Finne added glass and

borrowed space from a storage area, turning a dated kitchen into a generously proportioned place to cook, eat, and enjoy the view.

It feels like a new kitchen, although you can trace the bones of the old one. The hemlock ceilings are original, but Finne exposed a steel beam that had been boxed out and inserted a roof monitor, spanning the dining and living areas, with motorized operators that allow for venting. The slightly expanded footprint meant patching in new sections of terrazzo floor. “We started off thinking we’d match the existing terrazzo, but that stone and cement matrix was no longer available,” Finne explains. “I shifted gears and said, rather than be close, let’s have a contrast.” The new rectangle of espresso-colored terrazzo anchors the open kitchen. It’s also a foil for the pale cherry cabinetry, which Finne designed. Some of the panels are smooth resin inset with natural grasses, others have a CNC-milled texture like woven wood.

Custom-fabricated surfaces are a feast for the senses. A 30-foot-long wall is clad in umber-colored steel panels that bend around the wall’s undulations, and the bar’s 1-inch-thick cast glass, lit from below, adds sparkle to the room’s muted hues. “The intensity of the detailing adds a whole new level to the house,” Finne says. —Cheryl Weber, *LEED AP*

Project: Lake Forest Park Renovation, Lake Forest Park, Wash.; **Builder:** Schultz Miller, Seattle; **Architect:** Finne Architects, Seattle; **Photographer:** Benjamin Benschneider. / **Resources:** **Backsplash:** Ann Sacks; **Cabinets (custom):** Taylor Made Furniture; **Cooktop:** Gaggenau; **Countertops:** GlassWorks, Silestone; **Dishwasher, Oven, Refrigerator:** Miele; **Flooring:** General Terrazzo & Tile; **Paints/stains:** Daly’s, Devine Color; **Plumbing fittings:** Hansgrohe; **Windows:** Eagle.

New clerestories bring natural light into the kitchen, and radiant-heated terrazzo floors provide even warmth. Many components were custom-fabricated, such as the resin and CNC-milled cabinets; cast-glass bar counter; hand-blown glass light fixtures; and steel wall panels, which were left outside to weather for three months. The resin panels are wired for LED backlighting.



Boundary Issues



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Like a refined tree house, the bath in this renovated ranch house seems to float in a thicket of trees. "The bath was intended to feel like an outdoor space," says architect Nils C. Finne. "You feel like you've returned to some primeval bathing experience."

Finne took full advantage of the site—a large wooded property without close neighbors—to create a bath that visually dissolves into nature. The room projects into the landscape, bounded on three sides by glass walls. In the southwest corner, an oval tub sits in a steel frame with a laser-cut pattern resembling vine runners, which is repeated on the valances. Other custom fabrications add dimension to the simple, neutral space. The twisted steel towel bars are a Finne signature, part of his bath accessory line called Zri, which means "twist" in Norwegian. He also hand-drew an opaque pattern for the glass wall separating the bath and master bedroom. The pattern was transferred as a film to the glass, an economical alternative to etching. "The film can be easily pulled off—it's a safety valve," he says, "but the clients happen to really like it."

With its new gabled fir ceiling, cherry cabinets, and limestone floors and countertop, the bath plays off its natural setting. Over the sinks Finne added large mirrors, suspended in thin steel frames, that reflect patterns and light from the continuous windows behind them. They contribute a moment of glamour to an otherwise restrained room, and they do sway, underscoring the sense of hovering lightly in space. These details add up to what Finne calls crafted modernism, "the notion that modernism must embody the care of making, the enduring value of craftsmanship, to acquire lasting value and meaning." —C.W.