

LIVING IN MONTEREY COUNTY

Haven

FALL 2008

**A NATURALLY
BEAUTIFUL HOUSE**

**STUDENTS TAKE
TO THE SOIL**

A QUILTING COUPLE

**APPLE SEASON
AT GIZZDICH**



The Cover: A Big Sur house of glass, wood and stone pays homage to its magnificent surroundings. See page 20.

Cover Photo: Robert Canfield

This Page: An apple pie from Gizdich Ranch in Watsonville (right), see page 12. A chair and desk filled with succulents at the Carmel Middle School garden, (below); see page 32; Andy Rea photo. A detail of a "Gypsy Garden" quilt (below right), see page 28; Randy Tunnell photo.



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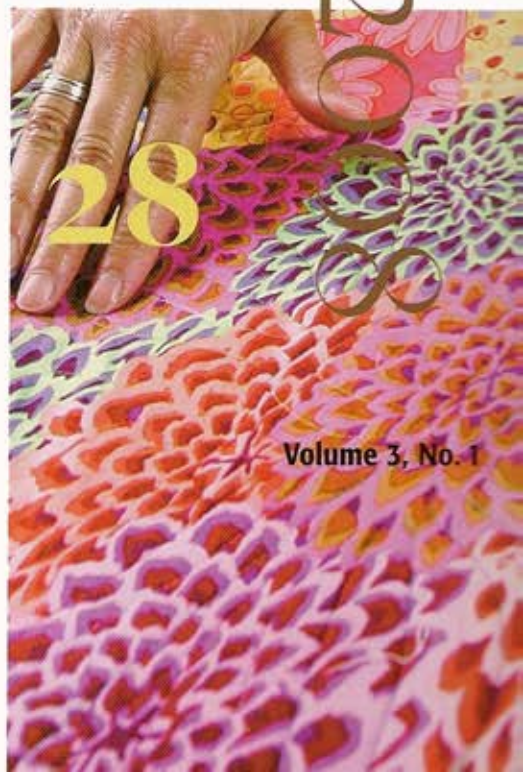
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Blending with Nature

By Sandra Leader



Photography: Robert Canfield

SOME HOUSES MAKE A STATEMENT IN A grand way; they stand out from their surroundings and proclaim "look at me."

By contrast, the contemporary Big Sur dwelling belonging to Zach and Langka Treadwell makes a statement by blending in, by melding so naturally into the landscape that you barely know it's there. Though it has a simple, unique beauty of its own, it seems to be saying instead, "Look at the grandeur of nature."

The 1,900 square-foot house, which has been featured in *Dwell* magazine and the *New York Times*, is perched on a ridge overlooking Pfeiffer Beach. Tucked discreetly into a hillside, its presence is virtually undetectable from neighbors' homes. With its undulating sod roof, the elongated, rectangular one-story wood and glass structure looks almost as if it had been lifted out of the ground on an unseen hinge.

"The idea was to let the hills roll onto the roof so that the neighbors — who are fairly close on the uphill side — looking down really can't see the house. They see the roof," says principal architect Mary Ann Schicketanz of Carver + Schicketanz Architects in Carmel.

The Treadwells, who live in Malibu, wanted a sturdy vacation home where they could escape with their children from the stresses of big-city life.

They originally wanted to buy a pre-existing house and had no interest in property. Despite their reservations, an agent took them to look at the 40-acre parcel on Dani Ridge. They took one look at it and were ready to sign papers, says Langka.

When it came right down to it, there was really only one building site. "Although the acreage was large, there were a lot of constraints — land use, planning issues — the available area to build was a narrow sliver right next to the road," says Mary Ann.

A swath was cut into the hillside and the structure positioned on the carved-out shelf behind a retaining wall. A curving stone wall to the east provides privacy from the road. The utility areas, including the garage, the pantry, a half bath and the laundry, were placed below ground. Water and gas tanks, the generator and the well head, also were hidden from view beneath the ground.

"When you're out in Big Sur, you see all those water tanks. We tried to create something that sits very lightly on the land and respects that pristine environment as much as we could," says Mary Ann, who praises the general contractor, Hunt Brothers Construction. "They did a great job. [The house] sits on the side of a hill and has never leaked. It's working beautifully."



The master bedroom (left); the see-through entrance (right)

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Mary Ann sought out horticultural consultant Fred Ballerini of Habitat Space who helped maintain the natural look of the grounds by restoring two acres of grassland and planting native grasses on the sod roof.

Selection of materials was crucial in creating the sense of cohesiveness with its surroundings that is the overriding characteristic of this house. The exterior is of plate glass and cedar siding that has weathered to a silver-gray sheen. The floors are of limestone; countertops of limestone or concrete.

A great room, open to the kitchen and eating area, features a wavy ribbed Douglas fir ceiling anchored by a fireplace of aged barn wood and stainless steel. Additionally, there are two bedrooms for the children, a master suite and 3½ bathrooms.

It is a durable home, built to withstand the wilder forces of nature that predominate in Big Sur, as well as the onslaught of five energetic youngsters. "It's very practical; there are stone floors throughout the house, easy surfaces, simple tiled baths, concrete counters, no fussy things," says Mary Ann. Credit for the concrete countertops, with their subtle coloration, goes to Travis Trapkis of Palo Colorado Canyon.

"The view is the most important aspect," says Langka. "When you walk in the front door, the first thing you see is a glass panel, so you don't see anything but the ocean – blue, blue, blue ocean for miles. And that's what we wanted. It's almost like a glass tent."

Many energy-saving features were factored into the home's design, including the limestone floor that soaks up the sun's energy during the day and radiates heat at night. "It's a really good passive solar house," says Mary Ann. "It's warm in the winter, cool in the summer. It has great cross ventilation. It's very economical in terms of energy use because of the way it was built."

The house is "really minimal, but not at all cold," says Langka. "It's really about where it's placed on the earth. It's just so special. It's a very contemporary cabin."

Langka, who had feared that building a home would be stressful and demanding, found the process surprisingly smooth. "I don't remember having one trauma. I don't think the whole year we ever had a disagreement or something that went wrong." 🌞