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## Artsy house draws acclaim

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A couple of Chapel Hill art enthusiasts decided there was no better way to appreciate art than to build a studio in their home.

Ellen Cassilly and Frank Konhaus, who married four years ago, said they wanted to build a house that would let them showcase art and have space where an artist could come live.

“Since we don’t have any kids, we thought it would be neat to have an apartment where an artist could come and stay,” Konhaus said. “It could be a painter, a jewelry artist, a metal artist. Any kind of artist.”

So Cassilly and Konhaus built a house that consists of two separate pods, connected by a bridge.

The living area for the couple is in the left pod and the artist apartment is in the right. The bridge serves as an art gallery.

The couple plans to hold art shows of a future live-in artist’s work.

Their house is so unusual, it has been recognized by Triangle Modernist Houses, a nonprofit group that has recognized 592 modern buildings in the Triangle area.

The group offers tours of the homes they sponsor, but all tickets have been sold for the Feb. 28 tour of Cassilly and Konhaus’ home, alternately called “the Trapezoid House” or “the Tree House.” Some tickets might be available the day of.

“I was able to see it six months ago and it was going to be fantastic so I selected it,” said George Smart, chairman of the board of directors of Triangle Modernist Houses.

But the home is not just innovative in its design. It’s modern in environmental aspects as well.

“Step lightly on the earth — that was what we tried to do,” Cassilly said. “By having the house come down in two smaller footprints instead of one, it allows water to go around.”



DTH/Justin Spinks

Ellen Cassilly and Franks Konhaus’ “Trapezoid House” contains an apartment for a live-in artist and gallery space for hosting art shows.

Shower water from the home is also collected in a cistern and redistributed for landscaping watering.

Konhaus found the property overlooking New Hope Creek and 1,600 acres of Duke Forest on Mimosa Drive north of Chapel Hill.

“I was looking up land records and sending letters trying to find the right spot,” he said. “And then, walking through the forest one day, I saw this spot.”

Cassilly is an architect in Durham. Her firm was the principal planner of the house, which was completed in November.

The house was valued at \$250,096 in the county’s 2009 property evaluations.

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).

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