home of the month
March's profile of a well-designed living space
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Next month's home: The Davis Residence

BY PAUL TESAR

The Leinbach Residence, designed by Raleigh architect Tina Govan in Durham’s Solterra Development, was a tight-budget project. The project’s success, Govan says, is due to a careful consideration of space and how it works with the owners’ everyday living experiences. Govan, who grew up in Japan and worked in Japan for two years, took that philosophy to heart.

The upstairs space also is sleep-friendly. Because the homeowners had altered the architect’s plans to include a dog-friendly area, Govan added a small built-in dog bed. The upstairs living room has another built-in dog bed.

The Leinbach Residence is a dog-friendly home. The downstairs living room has a concrete floor, instead of the polished finish we'd like to see,
The Leinbach Residence is a house that is true to our North Carolina motto: “Esse quam videri” — to be rather than to seem!

“Many people would shudder at the thought,” Govan said. “But, by surrounding the 8-foot ceiling in places, you can step back and say, ‘Wow, that’s really big.’” To keep the home from feeling small, “I wanted it to have a certain simplicity and modesty to its design,” Govan said. “When you step into the 8-foot ceiling area it feels much higher,” Govan said.

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The kitchen, dining and living areas open onto outdoor terraces and a screened porch. “Depending on the season, exterior doors can be thrown open and outdoor spaces become continuous with indoor ones,” Govan said. While the design in this home is commonly associated with modern architecture and its notions of abstract, minimalist and bareness, the spatial strategies expressed here are simply a way to give the clients more for their money. The intent is to make everyday life in the house more enjoyable. The homeowners can experience the things that matter to them — the season changes, the weather and the light conditions outside.

The shoji screen in a double-sided bookcase separates the living room and an office. It can be opened so there is a view into the living room and outside, or it can be closed for privacy. Two bedrooms, on opposite sides of the house, open to adjacent offices that open to outdoor space. Not to sacrifice square footage for a hallway, pocket door openings are treed up so that you can pass through rooms. Depending on how the homeowner wants to use them, the bedrooms and offices can serve as public or private rooms. Pieces of furniture are also used to define spaces.

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- A bank of windows on the south side of the house for solar heating
- Concrete flooring forms a thermal mass for the passive solar house. Under the concrete is 4 feet of gravel, which also helps as an thermal mass. The concrete is easy to clean.
- Laminate countertops with wood trim are simple, inexpensive with a natural feel. The same is true for the South- ern yellow pine trim throughout.
- Opening the house to the outside, where outdoor activities can spill outdoors, adds a lot of value without a lot of investment.
- B-foots ceilings. “Many people would shudder at the thought,” Govan said. But, by surrounding the B-foot ceiling in places, the ceiling gives the illusion that the ceiling over the entire forms a perimeter shell, like a suit, around the living and dining rooms. When you step into the B-foot ceiling area it feels much higher, Govan said.

Tina Govan

exterior spaces

The concrete flooring from the home’s interior continues to the outside, forming the walk under the terraces, flooring for the screened porch and the patio off the dining room. “You have a sense of the materials in the house continuing outside,” Govan said. “I kind of connects the in and out.”

The terra-cotta is on the south side of the house outside a wall of south-facing windows in place for solar gain. Because in the summer & sun can get really hot, while winter it was planted to shade the walk and the house’s interior. In the winter when the wisteria dies back, the sun comes in.

The grounds are carefully landscaped with several usable outdoor “rooms.” Because in the summer it can get really hot, white wisteria was planted to shade the walk and the house’s interior.

The architect’s aim

Approaching the unpretentious house, you see pitched roofs with substantial overhangs, traditional lap-siding with corner boards, muted colors and materials that won’t need much upkeep and will age with dignity. The look is reminiscent of elements, materials and details opened from farm houses or older country homes that might be found in the surrounding landscape. There’s no intent to show an elitist aesthetic or an unadulterated historical replica into anybody’s face. Externally, this house speaks about continuous with indoor ones,” Govan said. While the ideas in this home are commons...