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Home & Garden



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 Crochet goes to the cool party with some help from the Happy Hooker. **PAGE 7E**

home of the month

March's profile of a well-designed living space

See more photos plus the floor plan and photos of all of the Home of the Month entries online at www.newsobserver.com, Key word: **Architectural**.
 Next month's home: The Davis Residence



Tigerlily Rosen has a Frida Kahlo replica with her English bulldogs.
 LOS ANGELES TIMES PHOTO BY ANNE CUSACK



the concept

Step inside and find transparent and interconnected spaces made possible by screens, look-through bookcases and sliding doors that stay open most of the time. It's hard to believe that the ground floor is under 1,400 square feet. The compact floor plan is efficient and energy-conscious.
 "An open plan with long diagonal views, plenty of windows and hallways that end in views out, make the house feel bigger than it is," architect Tina Govan said. "Shortened walls, storage cabinets and sliding panels softly define boundaries between rooms, creating flexible degrees of privacy and openness. Such permeable boundaries allow the sharing of space and views, making public spaces feel bigger and private ones less confined." This provides cheap additional square footage and nearly doubles the living area, illustrating that you can achieve a sense of openness and generosity within tight constraints of size and budget.

Substance over image

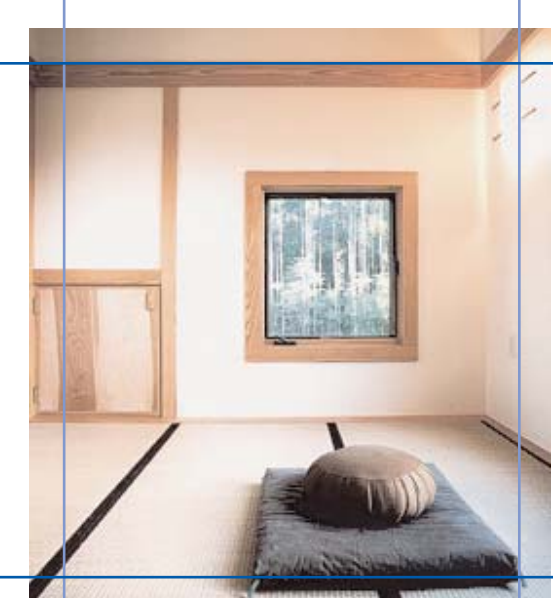
By PAUL TESAR
 GUEST COLUMNIST

Today's Home of the Month is reviewed by Paul Tesar, a professor of architecture at N.C. State University's College of Design. Home of the Month, a collaboration with the College of Design, shows possibilities in constructing a living space that's well thought-out and built with the homeowners' living patterns and preferences in mind. Each month we'll profile a new Home of the Month, selected from 27 designs by area architects. The goal: to inspire and offer knowledge that can be applied to any home's design.

Maybe the Leinbach Residence, designed by Raleigh architect Tina Govan in Durham's Solterra passive solar co-housing community, will help put to rest a false dichotomy that has plagued the architectural community, the real estate business and public opinion for some time now: that a house is either "contemporary" or "traditional."
 "Contemporary" is usually defined as having simple and straightforward forms, lots of glass and natural light, strong con-

nections between inside and outside, and flowing and interconnected spaces. Traditional is what we would call the structure that looks like what we expect a "house" to look like.
 Now, look at the Leinbach Residence. Into which box does it fit?
 Fitting the house into one or the other category is difficult largely because neither the architect nor her clients were willing

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asian influences

Because the homeowners had lived in Japan at one time, they wanted some Japanese features in their home. Govan was very familiar with the lightness, transparency, modularity and flexibility of traditional Japanese houses. (She had worked in Japan for two years.)
 Features such as shoji screens, a tatami room and a gravel garden were customized to improve the homeowners' everyday living experiences. The tatami room, the place for yoga and meditation, for example, is upstairs, away from the living spaces. The window placement in the space is very critical. "When you are on the tatami mat, you are sitting on the floor. We had to place the window so that you had a direct view out, capturing the trees, but not low enough so that you see the cars passing outside on the road."
 The upstairs space also is sleeping quarters for guests and the grandkids when they visit.

more photos + architect's comments, | page 12e

the project

the leinbach residence

Architect | Tina Govan
Firm | Tina Govan Architect
Project location | Durham
Beds/baths | 3- 2½
Heated square footage | 1,745 (365 upstairs, 1,380 downstairs)
Unheated | 1,000
Cost | About \$135 square foot
Key design concept | Distinctive modesty, passive solar features



Check out the birdhouses

The Great N&O Birdhouse Contest is going on this weekend at the JC Raulston Arboretum at 4415 Beryl Road in Raleigh. Judging for children and adult categories begins at 11 a.m. The birdhouses will be on display from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. Other activities include tours of the arboretum's gardens and a seminar on bluebirds.
 For a full schedule of events, see **Page 6E**.



the leinbach residence

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1E

to accept such simplistic distinctions as alternatives that would exclude each other. But what is perhaps most admirable about Govan's Leinbach Residence, built for a retired couple with a tight budget and a tight space, is that it inverts what we see in so much typical and conventional residential design today. The pretentious, image- and status-conscious external appearances with very ordinary, dull and predictable arrangements of interior rooms is replaced with a house with a modest demeanor that does not dazzle you from the outside, but upon entering, embraces you with a luminous warmth, offering lots of surprises and simple delights.

The Leinbach Residence is a house that is true to our North Carolina motto: "Esse quam videri" — to be rather than to seem!



exterior spaces

The concrete flooring from the home's interior continues to the outside, forming the walk under the trellis, 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. "It kind of connects the in and out."

The trellis is on the south side of the house outside a wall of south-facing windows in place for solar gain. Because in the summer it can get really hot, white wisteria 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."

architect's aim



Tina Govan

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 gleaned from farm houses or older country homes that might be found in the surrounding landscape. There's no intent to shove an elitist aesthetic nor an unadulterated historical replica into anybody's face. Externally, this house speaks about practicality, site-specificity and substance.

Govan said: "My goal was to open up the house to the outside, making the house that was small not feel small to use. I wanted it to have a certain simplicity and modesty to its design. The homeowners wanted a Japanese aesthetic combined with a North Carolina vernacular. We actually looked at an old tobacco barn in Pittsboro as a model for the house" and combined it with a Japanese element, marrying the two."



boundaries

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 lined 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 also are used to define spaces.



interior

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 ideas in this home are 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.

cost cutters

■ **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 a thermal mass. The concrete also is easy to clean.

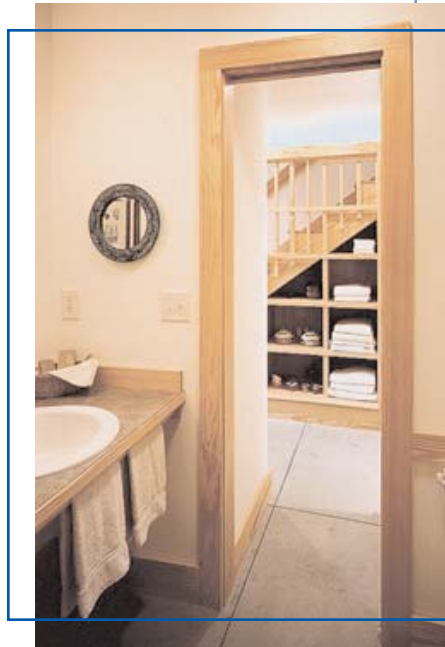
■ **Laminate countertops with wood trim** are simple, inexpensive with a natural feel. The same is true for the Southern yellow pine trim throughout.

■ **Opening the house to the outside**, where indoor activities can spill outdoors, adds a lot of value without a lot of investment.

■ **8-foot ceilings.** "Many people would shudder at the thought," Govan said. But, by surrounding the 8-foot ceiling in places with a 7-foot ceiling gives the illusion that the 8-foot ceilings are higher. A 7-foot ceiling over the entry forms a perimeter shelf, like a soffit, around the living and dining rooms. When you step into the 8-foot ceiling area it feels much higher, Govan said.

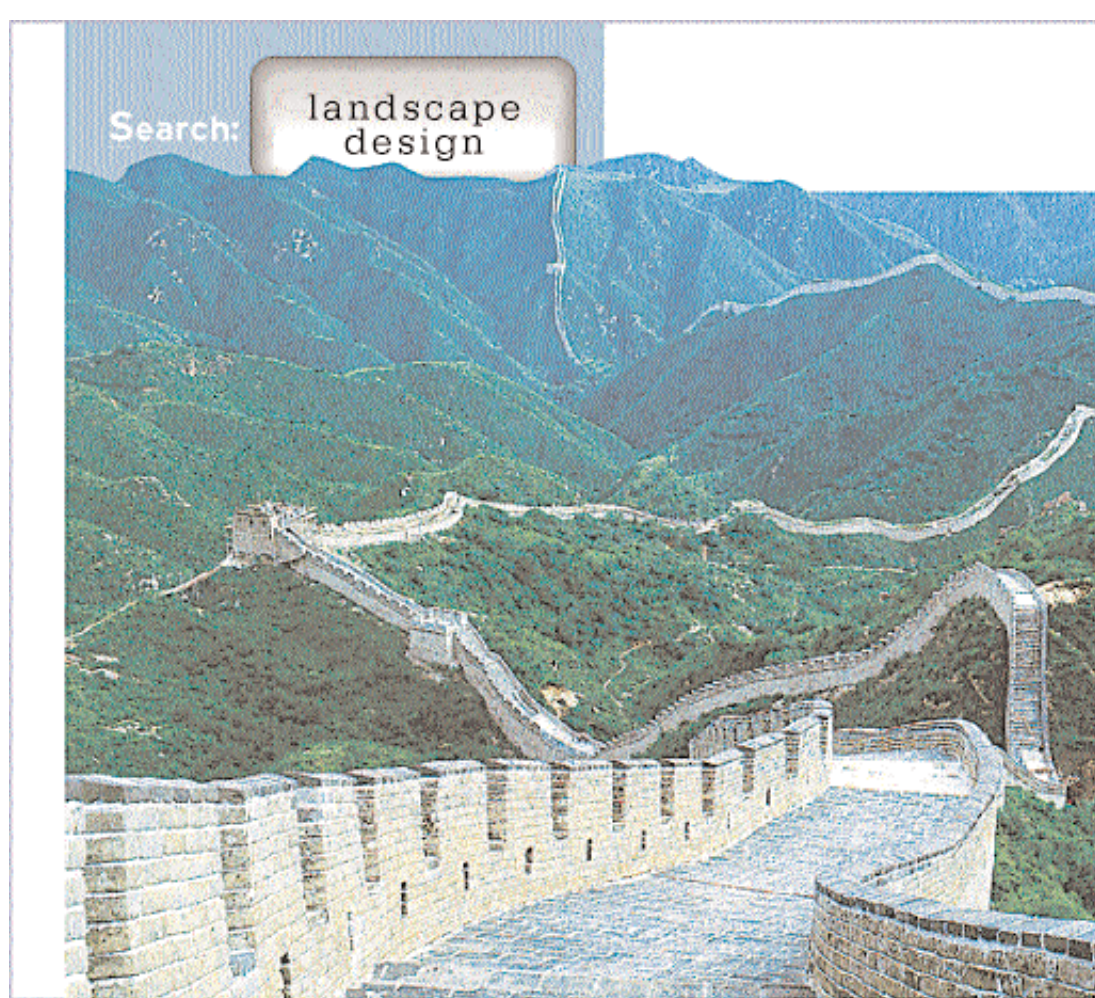
■ **Walls were thickened** to provide storage.

■ **Pocket doors, open shelves and using every ounce of space.** "Under the stairs, shelves on one side hold linen and on the other side hold music equipment for one of the home's two offices." A stacked washer and dryer also are tucked under the stairs, making an extra-wide hallway double as a laundry room.



Home & Garden editor Weta Ray Clark contributed to this report.

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