



SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2008

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

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home of
the month

March's profile of a well-designed living space

Take a look at a photo gallery at www.newsobserver.com, search **home&garden**.



the exterior

Glass walls wrap primary living spaces, wood cladding gives privacy to upper level sleeping areas, and masonry walls ground the Paletz-Moi house to its Duke Forest site.

PHOTOS BY PAUL WARCHOL

The Home of the Month series is a collaborative effort with the N.C. State University College of Design through its Home Environments Design Initiative. Featured homes, selected by an expert panel, highlight the benefits of good home designs and represent the diversity of homes and home renovations designed by North Carolina architects. The articles, written by faculty, graduate students and alumni of the School of Architecture, bring to light the exemplary attributes of each home. Our goal is to offer inspiration and knowledge that can be applied to your living space.



An open staircase, lined with bookcases, connects the main wing's three levels.

Living in a work of art

The owners and the architect collaborate to create a light-filled, functional home

By TRAVIS HICKS
CORRESPONDENT

DURHAM

"Others have houses; we have a work of art," say Toril Moi and David Paletz, proud owners of a minimalist house in the Duke Forest area of Durham.

In fact, one of the earliest study models of the house reminded Moi of a piece by favorite sculptor Anthony Caro. What makes their house — with spaces that connect inside to outside — a work of art is not only its aesthetic richness but also

the collaborative design process.

It's no surprise that Paletz, Duke University's coordinator of the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, found inspiration in a film. From a documentary about the making of Richard Meier's Getty Museum in Los Angeles, Paletz and Moi gleaned a phrase that captured their vision for a house: "Interconnected Spaces Bathed in Light."

With their phrase in hand, Paletz and Moi looked for an architect who could

the project

paletz-moi house

Location: Durham
Architect: Kenneth Hobgood Architects, 124 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh, 828-7711

Square footage: 4,750

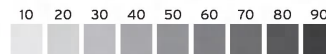
Budget: Not provided
Key attributes: Interconnected spaces bathed in light

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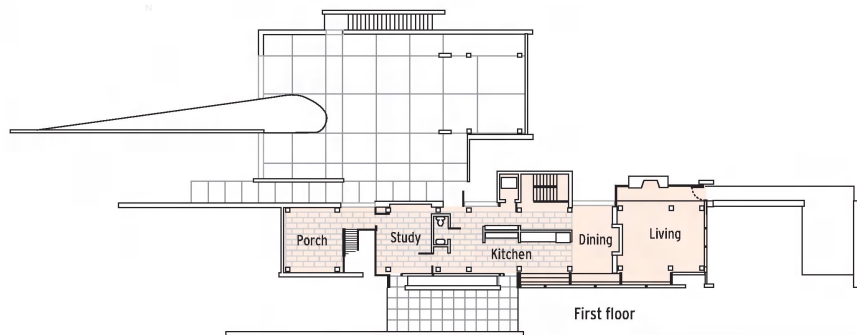
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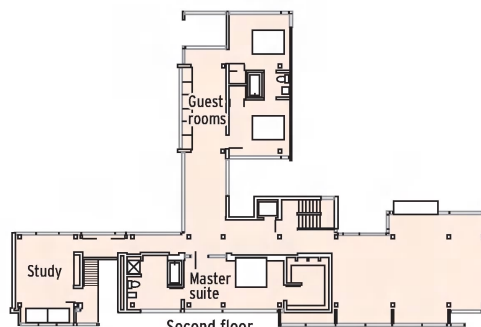


4E

Home & Garden

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First floor



Second floor

HOME

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speaking their language and interpret their vision. They connected with Kenneth Hobgood, an award-winning, internationally recognized Raleigh architect, and began their collaboration. "Kenneth got it," Moi recalls, "and understood our vision for the house."

Architect
Kenneth
Hobgood

Hobgood met with Paletz and Moi once a week for about a year before putting pen to paper. Moi, James B. Duke Professor of Literature and Romance Studies at

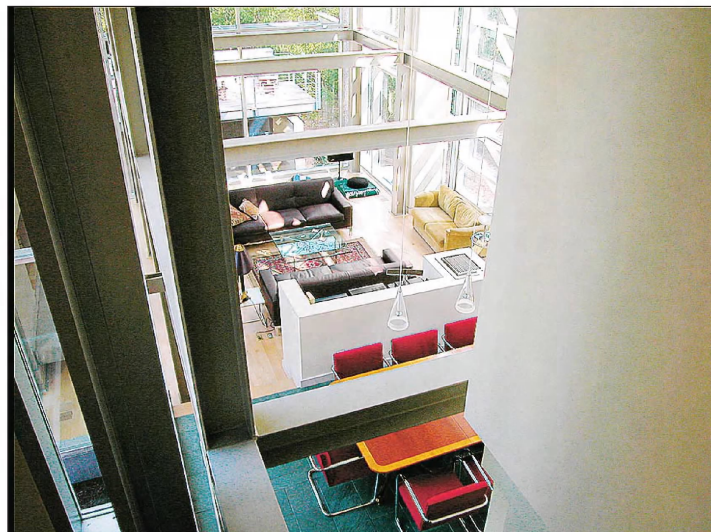
Duke, describes the process as similar to psychoanalysis. The process generated a mutual respect for one another's work, and the house became common intellectual ground between architect and clients.

Moi and Paletz were genuinely interested in the design process and in working with Hobgood to ensure the functionality of their house. While the homeowners gush over their house's inspiring spaces and its ability to connect inside to outside, they are quick to point out that the house is purely functional.

Paletz and Moi, each born in Europe, do not concern themselves with typical American amenities. "There isn't a single wasted space in the house," Moi says. There is no attic, no garage, no his and her sinks or bathrooms, no bonus room, no cathedral ceiling, no spaces to collect clutter. In fact the couple are quick to point out that the only clutter in the house belongs to Paletz's son, who is away teaching film in Prague. The couple trade otherwise underused spaces for two offices, a film screening room, a multitude of bookcases and three outdoor terraces to meet their needs.

On the slope

Built in 2002, the three-story, two-wing house sits atop a steep wooded site. Hobgood takes advantage of the slope by locating the main entry at a midlevel that



Architectural elements, such as steel columns and beams, floors, walls, ceilings and stairs are isolated from one another to express each element for what it is.

PHOTOS BY PAUL WARCHOL

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

General contractor: Spec Con Inc., Wendell. 266-5992

Structural engineers: Stroud Pence Engineers, Raleigh. 782-1833

Color material finishes: Louise Jordan, Lynn Hobgood, Raleigh. 828-6591

contains a double-height living and dining space, a galley kitchen and Moi's office. An open stair, lined with bookcases, connects the three levels of the main wing of the house. A film viewing room, which requires less daylight, is on the lower level with the laundry room, mechanical room and walk-out access to the backyard. The master bedroom suite and Paletz's office are on the upper level of the main wing. The two-bedroom guest suite hovers above the carport in a perpendicular wing.

Hobgood, a popular faculty member at N.C. State's College of Design, is renowned for clean, simple lines in his clearly organized work. The Paletz-Moi House fits nicely into his portfolio while responding to the clients' specific vision. Large expanses of glass, open and functional space, and a stark



The minimalist house takes advantage of the sloping site.

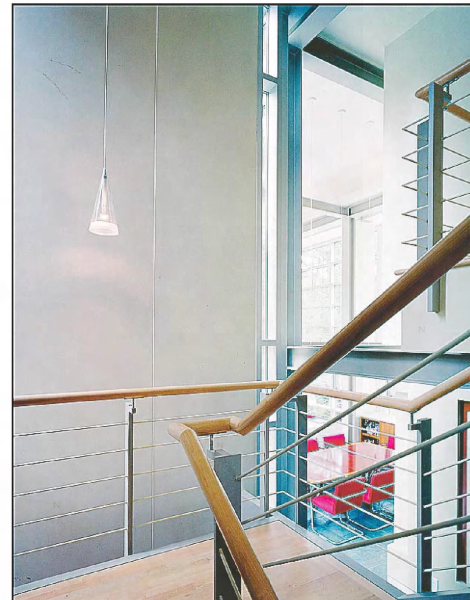
minimalism reconcile the clients' vision with Hobgood's idiom.

Paletz and Moi had to combine two adjacent lots to ensure the setbacks and buffers necessary for the kind of openness and light they envisioned. Now, everywhere they look, there's glass, as if they're living inside an ever-changing landscape painting. As seasons change, so does the light coming into the space.

"In the summer we have reflected green hues from the trees flooding this space, and in

the fall the colors obviously change," Moi says. All this glass allows the couple to watch the animals that live in the woods, including the deer that like to eat the couple's camellias.

Open space planning means that all rooms in the house enjoy similar views. From his upper level office, Paletz can look out to the trees and see from one end of the house to the other in the other direction. Openings in the house also allow for views from one layer of the house to another. Maintaining the openness was so important to Moi that she sacrificed some of her office space to provide a view from the front door through to the backyard. Similarly, the kitchen has an open view through the dining



Architect Kenneth Hobgood's design allows longer lines of sight in the interior as well as views to the outside.

area to the living area.

The house's material palette reinforces the minimalist, modern aesthetic and consists of exposed steel structure, exterior metal panels, masonry walls that ground the house to the site, wood siding along the more private rooms, a prominent aluminum window wall along the primary living areas and exposed metal chimney flues. Hobgood expresses the purity of the materials and construction systems without being overtly ornamental or fussy.

All those books

Interior finishes are also minimal, from the stark, painted steel structure to the crisp wood floors and the streamlined European pear wood kitchen cabinets. Slate floor tiles connect interior spaces to exterior terraces. In typical Hobgood fashion, the design's floors, walls, stair, structure, windows and ceilings are held off each other in a way that expresses each element for what it is. And though it appears simple, it has taken Hobgood decades to refine these kinds of details. "The older I get, the simpler the designs become and quieter I become," he says.

One last-minute challenge Hobgood faced was finding a place for all the books. "They told me they had a lot of books,

and I thought that I had planned for them all. I didn't anticipate how many they really had." Once the reality of two academics' voracity for reading was revealed, Hobgood had to find even more space for all the books. Built-in bookcases add to the aesthetic composition of the central open stair and hallway, and free-standing bookcases are located throughout the house.

Moi warns that anyone building a house such as theirs be prepared for maintenance challenges. Paletz says, "It has taken us a while to find contractors who can work on our house." As such a diversion from the normal stick-built American house, the Paletz-Moi House confuses many contractors on first inspection. "They haven't seen anything like this before," Moi says. Hobgood concedes that a glass house is not for every client nor for every site, but Paletz and Moi love their house. "We consider it a privilege to own such a house. We love waking up here every day," Moi says, stretching out her arms to the treetop view from the master bedroom.

Travis Hicks is adjunct assistant professor in the N.C. State School of Architecture and senior designer at O'Brien/Atkins Associates in Research Triangle Park.

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