

oregon home

SUMMER 2022

Interior Design
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NEW DESIGNS *for* MODERN MARVELS

Seize the Day

by EMILY GROSVENOR

A modern home in Oregon wine country gives a couple a new outlook.

Residential Designer:
**MATTHEW DABY OF
M.O.DABY DESIGN**

Interior Designer:
**ANGELA MECHALEY OF
M.O.DABY DESIGN**

Builder:
**CELLAR RIDGE
CONSTRUCTION**

Photography:
**ERIN RIDDLE AND
KENTON WALTZ OF
KLIK CONCEPTS**





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GORDON AND KERRI SMITH spent the last three decades working as electrical engineers in a mile-long, windowless facility in Texas. As their careers wound down, the couple started taking long walks in Fort Worth, dreaming about what life would look like if they felt more at ease in their surroundings. After so much time spent indoors,

their next chapter was going to look — and sound — a lot different.

“We never saw the sun,” Gordon says. “We might have overcompensated a bit.”

The Smiths’ new residence, built on 80 acres atop a bluff in the foothills west of McMinnville and designed by Matthew Daby of M.O.Daby Design in Portland, has everything in the way of a connection to the natural world, including walls of floor-to-ceiling windows, a 270-degree view of the sun’s path across the sky, a location that feels tucked into Oregon’s shifting cloudscape and interior spaces that connect harmoniously with outdoor spaces. It feels like an observatory for its own little patch of the Willamette Valley, with migratory birds, curious turkeys, squirrels, cougars, owls and other wildlife making regular visits amid the changing landscape.

“There isn’t a day that goes by that I don’t discover something new about the home,” says Gordon. “Every new angle, new shadow, new sound, new view outside brings a smile to my face.”





ARCHITECTURAL REFRAIN

What about those windows? Gordon, a professed audiophile, has no single favorite song, but for Kerri, the answer is easy: Peter Gabriel's "Solsbury Hill." Designer Daby took the rhythm from the iconic song's first bars and gave them a visual representation in the changing widths on the exterior windows. He also brought the rhythm into the interior in a screen between the kitchen and the living room. "The song actually came on in the restaurant where we were eating a few minutes after we had the conversation," Kerri says.



Connecting Indoors to Outside

THE SMITH'S HOME came into being through a deep collaboration with designers schooled in biophilic principles — how buildings can enhance humans' relationship to the natural world — and a couple who longed to live according to more natural rhythms.

"Gordon and Kerri were as interested in the process as we were," Daby says.

During their first visit to the secluded site tucked into the McMinnville wine-growing AVA, designer Daby and interior designer partner Angela Mechaley sat atop the 825-foot hill for hours sketching house shapes and trying to relate a modern home concept to the site. After walking the property, Daby happened upon a fallen leaf from the bigleaf maples found on the grounds. He eventually settled on a design inspired by the shape of that leaf, one that maximizes the views from the property while creating tucked-in courtyards and refuge spaces both inside and out. They began calling the home Big Leaf.

"These shapes enabled the house to kink and engage the surrounding site, while still connecting as a whole





sculptural form,” Daby says.

Winding up the hill, the home presents itself as a quiet moment, with an entrance tucked into a courtyard. The front path draws visitors to a front door tucked away in a serene garden space.

“It’s quite the opposite of the ‘house on the hill’ moment,” Daby says. “It’s a little more incognito.”

Inside Daby designed the home to evoke the rhythms of the forest. The home’s main corridors were envisioned to evoke the feeling of a walk in the woods, with an inlaid wood path guiding people between the public and private spaces. Daby further played up the relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces with a unique wood-ceiling concept that extends from the interiors to the exteriors. Pops of natural agate peek through on the home’s polished concrete floors in the main living spaces, while 11-foot-high windows add to the feeling of openness in the home.

Material finishes add to the sense of being surrounded by nature. By mixing what Mechaley calls “dramatic neutrals” with



SPOTLIGHT: BIOPHILIC DESIGN

Big Leaf draws on the established tenets of biophilic design, the practice of building connection to nature into architectural structures.

Benefits:

- Supports brain function and creativity
- Improves physical health and healing
- Enhances mental well-being

Common elements:

- Natural light; explores light changes as they appear in nature
- Plants and animals
- Natural materials, patterns, objects, colors and forms
- Expansive views, refuge spaces and a mild sense of risk
- Natural sounds like wind, birdsong, and rustling plants

wood, concremented and steel, she was able to give an overall feeling of connectedness to nature, with choices meant to enhance the experience inside without competing with those jaw-dropping views.

“We chose every interior finish to harmonize with the architectural elements,” Mechaley says.

In the kitchen, Mechaley selected a custom, clear-coated calico walnut cabinetry for its movement and warmth, and aligned the grain to create a feeling of cohesion across cabinets. She used copper fixtures sporadically to add color and shine. Dark, honed quartz and marble provide a counterpoint to the warm woods.

In the living room, metal details like the cold-rolled steel fireplace hearth, by Pantheon, bring a hand-touched aesthetic into the modern space, as does the metal screen dividing the room from the kitchen.

At Home in the World

MUCH GOES INTO the making of a home, but feeling fully rooted in the place where you live isn't a given. For the first time ever, the couple know their neighbors and have regular outdoor potluck events with new friends. In the evening, they sit just outside their bedroom, near the home's west-facing slope, where Gordon reads and Kerri knits, and they can watch the sun set behind the rolling foothills of the Coast Range.

“Our favorite thing to say is: ‘We live here,’” says Kerri. 🏡

