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TRADITIONAL HOME'S DESIGN SHOWCASE HOUSE

A LABOR OF LOVE

Child Abuse Listening Mediation will benefit from tours of this new Montecito home

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Contrary to the usual horror stories associated with remodeling or building a house, the construction of the 8,000 square-foot Mediterranean house commissioned by Traditional Home magazine sounds like a year-long love fest.

"All of us feel good about it. We hit on all cylinders. It worked. I had way too much fun with this house," said architect William A. Harrison from his office in Atlanta. "There are no major imperfections."

"This house has good karma. Everyone met the deadlines. At times, we had 120 laborers working on any given day. Everyone had a can-do attitude, and there was an atmosphere of quality, a positive feeling," said Geoff Crane, president of Giffin and Crane, local contractors who built the house at 610 Cima Vista Lane above East Valley Road in Montecito.

For Katie O'Reilly Rogers, who did the landscaping, the house exudes "a sense of timelessness and elegance. It's a big house without being overwhelming."

Adding to the win-win situation, the home will be open for public tours benefiting Child Abuse Listening Mediation (CALM), the only nonprofit agency in Santa Barbara County that focuses on prevention and treatment of child abuse and family violence. Tours (\$25) are scheduled Feb. 24 through March 14 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and from noon to 4 p.m. Sundays.

According to Robert Young, West Coast editor for Traditional Home, the magazine has been "partnering" with charitable organizations ever since it began publication 10 years ago.

"Once we decided to build in Santa Barbara, we researched the various nonprofits and decided to work with CALM. From then on, they became part of our team, which included magazine staff, architect, developer, builder, interior designer and landscape architect," said Mr. Young. "We wanted our investment to pay off on multiple levels, including charitable organizations."

Needless to say, the CALM board members couldn't believe their luck when they were asked to become part of the team by organizing the tours for the public after the house was constructed, completely furnished by interior designer Barry Dixon of Warrenton, Va., and landscaped by Mrs. Rogers, local landscape architect.

"It sounded too good to be true," said Rebecca Adler, CALM's development director. "We have sponsored Design Showcase houses for 20 years, but this year we considered skipping it because we are in the midst of a \$5-million capital campaign. We didn't have the time to locate a home, arrange for renovation and then recruit interior designers to furnish the various rooms. It's a huge undertaking. With Traditional Home magazine's offer, all the work was done for us."

Since their last project was on the East Coast, the magazine staff decided two years ago to look for a building site on the West Coast. Mr. Young, who grew up in Pasadena, suggested they focus on the area between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. With the help of local real estate agent Laura Collector from Pitts & Bachmann, they found the 11-acre site, which is part of the historic Cima del Mundo (Top of the World) area.

It was owned in 1924 by Mrs. Lora J. Knight and sold in the 1930s to the Jesuits, who built a novitiate at the top of the property. In the 1960s, the estate was split into two tracts, with Casa de Maria Retreat and Conference Center now occupying 33 acres, while the remaining land is parceled into 5- to 12-acre sites, which are designated as the Cima del Mundo Oak Conservancy.

As the architect, Mr. Harrison envisioned a house "that looked as if it was growing out of the ground, and I wanted it to fit into the historic heritage of Santa Barbara — Mission style with a heavy arts and crafts influence. My biggest challenge was to make sure to get a good house and grounds within the constraints of local zoning."



Traditional Home magazine sought to build its latest showcase house somewhere between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. This site on Cima Vista Lane in Montecito turned out to be a natural as the house "seems to erupt from the earth," according to interior designer Barry Dixon.

What at first looked as if it would be a major hurdle turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

"When we began to excavate, we were surprised by the amount of stone and boulders, but all the stone in the house came from the site," said Mr. Harrison. "We split the boulders and used building techniques never tried before. I was amazed at how great the stonemasons are in this area, too. And the local craftsmen who did the interior trim work are some of the best I've worked with anywhere."

Some of the details "hark back" to the 1920s and 1930s, and "you don't see that much anymore," he pointed out.

Although he is pleased with the entire project, Mr. Harrison said he does have one favorite spot — the pavilion terrace jutting out from the family room.

"It has a stone base and arches. It's a nice place to be in. You can have your dinner there, watch the sunset, the mountains, and it relates to the oak woodlands that surround the house," he said.

Mr. Crane, who was faced with the daunting task of making the architectural drawings a reality under a tight deadline, admits his first thought was, "Can a house of this scale be built in a year?"

Not only was the goal accomplished on time, but the general atmosphere was surprisingly free of stress.

"We set up milestones on a critical path. As long as we hit those, we knew we were on schedule. Of course, it helped that the weather was excellent, too," said Mr. Crane, a fifth generation Santa Barbaran who serves on the board of trustees for Crane Country Day School, co-founded in 1928 by his grandfather.

The only glitches occurred when new products didn't arrive on time, or cutting-edge technology, unfamiliar to the workers, had to be installed. For example, the Maytag laundry center in the upstairs hallway, which features the first "agitator-free top-loading washing machine and a two-in-one upper drying cabinet and lower tumble dryer that fit in almost the same floor space as a standard dryer."

The interiors of the house are the work of Mr. Dixon, who spent much of his childhood abroad, moving with his family to exotic locales across the globe, including India, Korea, New Caledonia and South Africa. Many of these influences are reflected in the furnishings he



A covered porch overlooks the front yard and swimming pool.

created for the Traditional Home showcase.

Mr. Dixon felt that his initial unfamiliarity with the Montecito landscape and history was an asset, enabling him to better appreciate the natural surroundings and approach the interior design more objectively.

"The house itself seems to erupt from the earth," said Mr. Dixon, referring to the use of natural materials like boulders and stone from the property in the home's construction. "The fusions of cultures that populate the area — Spanish, American Indian, Asian and even modern Hollywood — also influenced my design."

In the areas of the house that overlook the mountains and receive sunlight in the morning and early afternoon, he chose organic dark colors and textures like light, rich, autumnal brown, green and purple shades, and natural iridescent materials for furnishings and textiles.

"On the ocean side of the house, I chose more fiery red and yellow tones to simulate the intense sunset shades of the later part of the day," Mr. Dixon said from his cell phone while driving from Washington, D. C., to his home in Warrenton. "In rooms like the master bedroom, which overlook the water, I used mirrored surfaces and marine-inspired materials like mother of pearl to capture the nuances of the view."

The house, which was designed as a weekend retreat, also features study centers for children, a media

room, gaming room, wine cellar and an elaborately equipped kitchen for entertaining both large and intimate gatherings.

Local landscape architect Katie O'Reilly Rogers knew exactly the feeling she wanted to create for the gardens surrounding the Traditional Home project.

"My goal was to create a believable setting for the home with gardens that feel like part of an Old World-style, turn-of-the-century California estate — a look of timelessness and elegance," she said. "What I didn't want was a property that announced that in 2003, Katie O'Reilly Rogers came in and built a garden."

Her first concern was circulation — creating efficient traffic flow from auto to house, from foot traffic to gardens and outdoor living areas and back to the house. She sought the most naturalistic, least contrived solutions.

Materials like Santa Barbara sandstone and flagstones were chosen for the hardscape — the paving, gates, trellises, columns, walls and other features that will remain unchanged for decades.

"One challenge I faced was to create a sense of intimacy within this large expanse of land," said Mrs. Rogers.

Her solution was to design eight separate gardens and outdoor gathering areas. Of them, her favorite is the one she calls "The White Necklace."

Located near the swimming pool, it includes an oval lawn, ringed by white tree roses under which are planted silver Lambs Ears and white narcissus.

"It's like a little jewel," she said.

Much like Mr. Dixon's approach to the interior of the home, Mrs. Rogers made sure the landscaping complemented the natural setting as well as the house and outbuildings.

"Instead of multicolored plants, I chose a predominantly white palette of flowering plants and relied on the color and texture of green foliage and grass to create interest," said Mrs. Rogers. "Flanking the gravel motor court, for instance, mature boxwood hedges are bordered with white azaleas, white camellias and viburnum, and traditional wisteria is used to cover heavy timber trellises."

Around the perimeter of the house, Mrs. Rogers used native plants to soften the border, and to add a slightly modern touch, she arranged the natives similar to ornamentals that would typically be used in their place.

IF YOU GO

What: Traditional Home magazine Design Showcase House

Where: 610 Cima Vista Lane, Montecito

When: Public tours Feb. 24 through March 14 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and noon to 4 p.m. Sundays

Tickets: \$25. Available at Arlington Theatre Box Office, 1317 State St., or by calling 963-4408

Proceeds: Benefit for Child Abuse Listening Mediation (CALM)

ALSO

In addition to the daily tours of Traditional Home magazine's Design Showcase home, special activities are also planned.

Meet the Designer: Interior designer Barry Dixon will discuss his inspiration and design vision for the house at noon Feb. 29.

Pein Air Art Exhibit and Sale: Event from noon to 4 p.m. March 7 will feature work of Santa Barbara artists in the showcase courtyard. Forty percent of proceeds will benefit CALM.

Garden Tour with Landscape Architect: Katie O'Reilly Rogers, local landscape architect, will lead tours of the showcase gardens at noon March 14.

Tickets for each event are \$25 and can be purchased at Arlington Theatre Box Office, 1317 State St.

Information: 963-4408

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