

california

HOME+DESIGN

2008

CH+D AWARDS

With new products and noteworthy interiors, here are this year's nine winners from around the state.

Kendall Wilkinson's room at the San Francisco Decorator's Showcase was a clear winner, p. 118

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2008 CH+D AWARD FOR
 ECO-FRIENDLY
 ARCHITECTURE



LOT TWIST

JAMES PHILLIP WRIGHT
 JAMES PHILLIP WRIGHT ARCHITECTS, LAFAYETTE



James Phillip Wright

It isn't easy being green. While environmental concerns are a priority now more than ever, sustainable building practices can still be more complicated and expensive than traditional methods. But with talk of government-imposed construction guidelines—such as San Francisco's proposed recommendations for greening private and commercial new projects—builders are getting in line to meet the demands of today's eco-conscious era.

Architect James Phillip Wright, previously known for extravagant Beverly Hills mansions and luxurious Malibu bungalows, made the leap into green design with two homes on adjacent lots in Potrero Hill. "All these sustainable products and building materials feel like a new palette for my canvas," says Wright. To efficiently utilize the L-shaped property—formerly the site of one 1,100-square-foot house built in the 1930s and an empty, landlocked area behind it—Wright used eco-friendly materials to build two new homes.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANTHONY PERES

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While details such as vertical design, bay windows and a second-story entry take cues from historic San Francisco row houses, Wright looks to the future with environmentally friendly materials.

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LEFT: Gracious windows in both houses provide unobstructed views of Marin, Twin Peaks and the Golden Gate Bridge. ABOVE: The glass-walled open staircase acts as a light shaft, carrying natural light throughout the home's three levels.

Also a licensed contractor, Wright's philosophy for the project was "to solve the seemingly unsolvable, beautifully." The biggest challenges—an awkward lot with proximity to a noisy freeway—were mostly

geographical. "But these problems provided the perfect catalyst for two modern home designs," Wright says. On the street-front side of the lot, Wright built a 2,100 square-foot, four-story home. A landscaped path extends along a copper-painted curving wall to a 2,400-square-foot three-story house at the rear of the property. An underground garage runs the length of the property and is accessible from both houses.

The street-facing structure is tall and narrow, with bay windows that reference a traditional San Francisco row house and are trimmed with Trex, a reclaimed wood-and-plastic composite. Clad with panels of Parklex, a nontoxic sustainable wood composite, the facade is resistant to damage from UV rays, weather and termites. The exterior cladding is set three-quarters of an inch away from the structural walls, creating a rain screen and



a ventilation system that helps naturally regulate the temperature inside the home. The new face of the house was designed to last with virtually no maintenance.

Inside, the exposed beams, as well as the staircases and trims, were constructed with engineered lumber, a product created from mill waste that is four times more durable than wood. Accustomed to traditional woods such as cherry, mahogany and walnut, Wright admits he was a little nervous to see the final result. "But the engineered lumber had an exotic, striped look similar to zebrawood," he says. The owners eventually chose a zebrawood table for the dining room to complement the materials he used for the home.

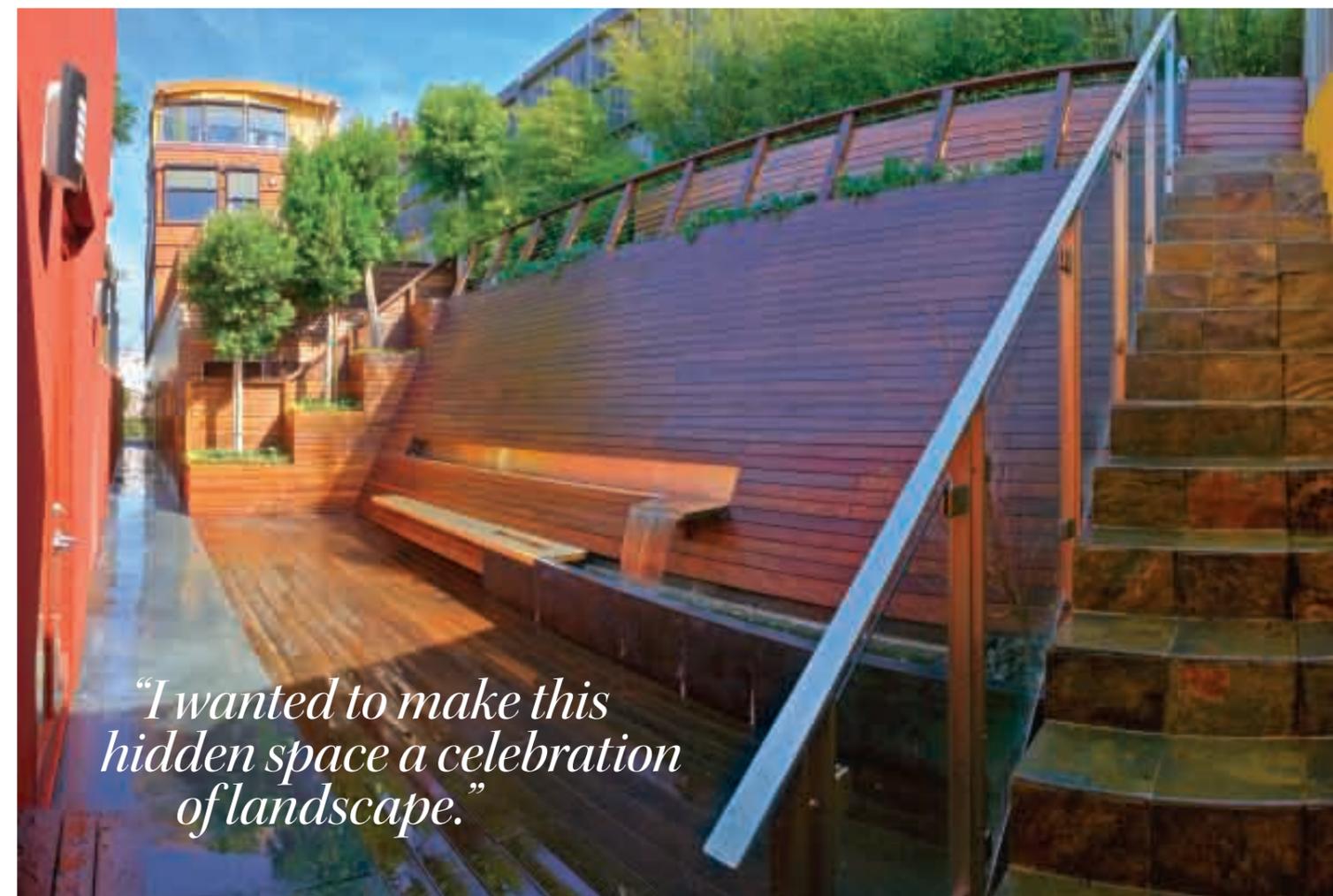
The rear house is quiet, spacious and more modern. At 2,400 square feet, Wright sought to minimize the footprint of the home by building it into the hillside so as not to impose on the neighbors. Brightly painted carmine red, the contemporary house also utilizes recycled, engineered lumber in its base trims. Glass half-walls act as a banister for the open staircase and refract natural light throughout the home's three levels.

Starting at the street, a "living wall"—framed in stainless steel and filled with soil and lava rock—runs up to the front door of the first home and stretches alongside the path on the side of the property leading to the residence in back. Between the two homes, a waterfall and terraced water garden, constructed of ipe, a sustainable tropical hardwood, is planted with drought-tolerant trees and bamboo and is a lush common ground. Wright says, "I wanted to make this hidden space a celebration of landscape."

"I was so excited to have the chance to immerse myself in a project like this," says Wright, who is currently working on a home in Carmel Valley that features passive solar heating and a curvilinear design that integrates the property with its landscape, making it appear as though the land has grown in around it. After familiarizing himself with a host of green building techniques for his inaugural eco-friendly project, Wright now whole-heartedly advocates working with nature rather than resisting its influence. Clearly, the challenges that once felt like constraints have become beacons of the finished site. —Melissa Alvarado



OPPOSITE: Both houses take advantage of natural light. Only the sublevel garage requires artificial lighting during the day. CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Panoramic views can be enjoyed from most every room; a shared garden between the two homes features a contemporary waterfall and drought-resistant greenery, including bamboo, which requires little water and thrives in the local climate; the terraced water garden was built with sustainable ipe wood.



"I wanted to make this hidden space a celebration of landscape."