

WHAT'S UP?

Check out our listings of local home- and garden-related events and seminars / D5



Home & Garden

WWW.PRESSDEMOCRAT.COM

OCCIDENTAL

Greenery is reflected in a koi pond at Ann Hatch's Asian-style home.



A view into the yard of the "Asian fusion" style home designed by Paul Discoe, which also features Japanese-inspired landscaping designed by Ron Herman.

FAR EAST FIT

Old and new come together in a house built using ancient Japanese joinery

By MEG MCCONAHEY
Photos by CHRISTOPHER CHUNG
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

One can almost feel the blood pressure plummet just stepping through the wooden gates of one particular retreat where east meets west off Occidental Road.

Thirty years ago, Ann Hatch, with a modest inheritance, set about to invest in a weekend retreat within an hour's radius of San Francisco. Her search for the perfect place for short-term escape took her to the apple orchards between Sebastopol and Occidental, where she settled into a funky, 12-foot-by-12-foot cabin of found materials on a property with the singular virtue of lots of luscious land for digging in the dirt.

It wasn't until the mid-'90s, however, that Hatch, a lifelong arts patron who founded the Capp Street Project in San Francisco and more recently the Ox Bow high school for the arts in Napa, was ready to make more of her humble weekender in Apple Country.



Paul Discoe, an ordained Buddhist priest and contractor, designed this house between Sebastopol and Occidental for owner Ann Hatch using Japanese design to exude serenity and an ancient Japanese construction technique, which in its purest form uses no hardware.

TURN TO FIT, PAGE D4

FIT: Asian style and serenity at Occidental home

CONTINUED FROM PAGE D1

Her efforts to come up with a suitable design eventually led her to Paul Discoe, an ordained Buddhist priest and contractor, trained in the art of Japanese Temple building using ancient joinery techniques.

Joinery is a system of timber framing where the frame is held together with wooden joints. In its purest form, no hardware is used at all. All the pieces are cut to fit together in interlocking structural form, like a three-dimensional puzzle.

Although Hatch didn't harbor any particular Japanese aesthetic, she knew she wanted lots of wood and an "en plein air" feeling.

The professional partnership at some point became personal. And now the pair share this ultra serene space, with its Japanese-inspired garden by landscape designer Ron Herman and a home and guesthouse that combines the precision woodworking methods of 15th-century Japan with state-of-the-art engineering and convenience, neatly concealed within the structure.

Architectural Asian fusion

Architecturally speaking, Discoe says, "If it were food it would be Asian fusion."

The result is really a collaboration — Hatch's ideas, folded into the far eastern sensibility of Discoe, who for the past six years has turned his refined and disciplined style to the 23-acre Woodside estate of Oracle tycoon Larry Ellison.

Discoe's Oakland-based Joinery Structures has been devoted full time to Ellison's formal Japanese Palace/Temple complex, which includes a 7,841-square-foot main house and three wings connected by walkways that overlook a 2.7-acre pond.

The Ellison project includes 10 buildings in all, with bridg-

"This house has country elements. But it's a contemporary adaptation."

PAUL DISCOE,
Joinery Structures

es and pathways leading to a moon pavilion, guesthouse, bridge house, boathouse, barn and "Katsura House," a replica made in Japan of a famous early 16th-century teahouse that was part of a royal compound in Kyoto.

Discoe's own place in Occidental is decidedly less grand. Both main house and guest house combined are just a little more than 2,000 square feet. But it is still magnificently beautiful in its unaffected simplicity.

Panel discussion today

The design is impressive enough to justify an entire panel discussion at today's Winter Market at the San Francisco Design Center. Discoe, master carpenter Chris Weiss, also of Joinery Structures, landscape architect Herman and design writer Zahid Sardar will explore "The Occidental Project: A Study in Openness and Serenity," at 10 a.m. in the Galleria Atrium, 101 Henry Adams St. The talk is free and open to the public.

"This house has country elements. But it's a contemporary adaptation," said Discoe, who, having "exhausted the possibilities of learning woodworking in California" as a young carpenter in the 1960s, turned his vision east.

"I was always interested in philosophical questions like many young people. And I was especially drawn to Taoist teaching, but I didn't know what they meant."

His spiritual quest led him to Tassajara, the Zen retreat in Carmel Valley, where he studied Buddhism for four years. At it was from there that he was sent to Japan to learn the art of Temple building.

For five years he studied day and night. "I did carpentry for 10 hours a day, six days a week, and I studied Buddhism at night," he says.

Upon his return he worked 25 years for the San Francisco Zen Center. For the center he built structures at Green Gulch Farm in Marin, Tassajara and The Greens Restaurant.

Paucity of walls

For her own home, Hatch, whose main home is in the heart of San Francisco, wanted as few walls as possible, a seamless integration between indoors and outdoors.

That, however, posed some structural challenges.

"Part of the problem from an engineering point of view is how to hold up a house if you don't have walls," Discoe says. "So engineer Joe Wilkinson came up with the idea of hiding metal frames inside posts to hold the house up."

The two-story gabled house features an ingenious glass wall in the combination dining room and kitchen that folds open like an accordion to bring the outdoors immediately in.

The site is situated on a level grid of 3-foot square stained concrete pavers that begin outside in the garden and around the pool, and continue in an unbroken flow into the house.

The home makes liberal use of wood, including Douglas fir from a mill owned by Hatch's family in Northern California and forest-salvaged, old-growth redwood.

Furnishings are minimalist, much of it handmade.

The house oversees a foot-bridge that provides a divide between a swimming pool on one side and a water garden pool on the other.



CHRISTOPHER CHUNG / The Press Democrat

The interior of Ann Hatch's Occidental home designed by Paul Discoe continues the "Asian fusion" theme.

Garden of mixed greens

Like the house, the garden is not a strict formal Japanese garden but a fusion, with neat rows of Provencal lavender and old apple trees that Hatch confesses she can barely keep up with, but hasn't the heart to remove.

The couple do more than lounge around the pool on weekends. They're avid gardeners, with a thriving *potager* just steps from the kitchen.

"We constantly have projects going. We're building a tree house and setting up a propagation shed and putting in a root cellar for olives. I wanted an olive press," says Discoe.

The contractor is also thinking ahead at work as he begins

to wrap up the Ellison project, freeing Joinery to take on a variety of new jobs, anything from homes and gates to walls and additions.

Occidental is where he comes to unwind.

"It's my meditation," he explains. "It's definitely a change of pace and definitely a stress-reducer."

Joinery Structures can be reached (510) 451-6345.

You can reach Staff Writer Meg McConahey at 521-5204 or mmcconahey@pressdemocrat.com.

PD spring, summer camp guide

The Press Democrat will publish its annual guide to regional spring break and summer day camps on Thursday, March 14.

Operators of day camps — no residential, please — who want to be considered for inclusion should mail a brochure and press release to Day Camps Guide, in care of The Press Democrat, P.O. Box 910, Santa Rosa, 95402. Or, you may email information to assts@pressdemocrat.com. All information must reach The Press Democrat by Thursday, Feb. 28. Material received after that date will not be included.

Information must include name and location of camp, session dates, price, brief description of activities offered and age restrictions. The name and telephone number of a contact person must be included.

What's your ideal Valentine's Day experience?

Tell us about your perfect Valentine's Day. A romantic getaway where cost is no concern?

A video and fresh popcorn at home on the couch?

Stranded on a desert island? Alone?

Whatever it is — whether it's already happened or you're planning it for the future — mail it by Jan. 31 to: Ideal Valentine's Day, The Press Democrat, 427 Mendocino Ave., Santa Rosa, 95401; fax it to 521-5343; or e-mail it to glauer@pressdemocrat.com.

MARKET: Design in showcase

CONTINUED FROM PAGE D1

Eighth St., at Natoma, will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to

Design Association on Wednesday will salute Graphic Designer Michael Vanderbyl and Los

