

Embracing Nature & Artistry

Fern Ridge Lake gem glows with
owners' creativity

BY PAUL OMUNDSON • PHOTOS BY MIKE DEAN

A CURIOUS CUBE-SHAPED HOUSE glows warmly atop a hill bathed in soft evening winds from nearby Fern Ridge Lake. Four-year-old Ada squeals with delight as she runs up a curving path to its gleaming, many-window facade, unaware that her artistic parents' new home is a deeply personal creative paean to their urban-industrial tastes and nature-embracing vision.

To Ada, it's simply a bright, cheery, loving home.

Her parents have made sure she has tricycle pathways circling the 2,800-square-foot home and a run of intriguing trails winding through the 30 acres of grounds, which include dense woods and plenty of deer, coyote, a few squirrels, and breathtaking views of Fern Ridge Lake.



Fern Ridge Lake home includes a tricycle path for the homeowners' daughter, Ada.



The staircase's treads are made from a black oak tree that fell during a storm.



"It's a site I've been looking for my whole life," says Sarah Peterman. In fact, she and her husband often gazed wistfully at the very same bluff years before while sailing below on Fern Ridge Lake reservoir. "We both dreamed of having a beautiful piece of rural land like this for a home," Peterman recalls. Then, in 2009, just before Ada was born, they made the dream come true, after tracking the property and seizing a purchase opportunity.



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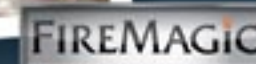
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A highlight of the kitchen is the concrete-topped island with an Electrolux ICON induction cooktop.



The kitchen countertops are made from a salvaged bowling lane.

It's no surprise that the home is unique and exquisitely tailored to its environs. Peterman is a renowned metal and jewelry artist and her husband, Tim Gift, a software engineer. So, creativity and a sense of doing justice to the beauty of the site ruled the day.

"We're both hikers and campers," Gift explains. "We knew we wanted to be very open to the outdoors, to be right in the nature around us."

They proceeded to conceptualize their dream home on Gift's computer, selecting a basic cube design to make things simple and inexpensive.

"Keep it raw, natural, warm, comfortable, simple, and affordable," says Peterman. "These were our criteria."

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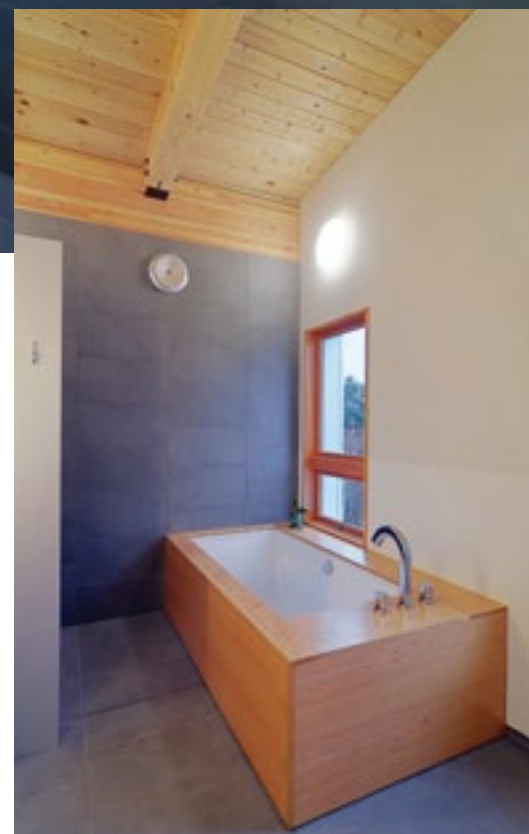
Key collaborations

But taking their initial computer mock-up to fruition? That's where architect Jan Fillingner and builder Rick Robertson came in. "We couldn't have accomplished this without Jan and Rick," Peterman says. "They were there every step of the way—for the big things and little things. Time and time again, when we seemed to get into a rut (during a three-year conception-to-completion process), they pulled us out. We developed a true partnership."

Fillingner, principal of Studio-e Architecture and a certified passive house design expert who rides his

bicycle to work, and builder Rick Robertson, a partner in Six Degrees Construction, were enthusiastically on board. The architect and builder have worked together before with intensely creative clients. But this was extraordinarily special. "We knew it would work," says Fillingner. "Sometimes you just have that feeling with certain clients. These folks understood our language and we understood theirs."

"A real important aspect," adds Robertson, "was their inherent understanding of lighting and how rooms connect physically and aesthetically. Sarah,




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The owners enjoy having a home that is open to nature and the outdoors.

being an accomplished metal artist, knows how materials enrich special places. She's added a lot of odd industrial components, from the big, rusty mooring balls she rescued from Schnitzer Steel to wood from bowling alley floors. Making this all come together seamlessly was a huge challenge. It was fun. It was exciting."

"Sarah and Tim were not only invested in the process, they drove the process," Fillinger emphasizes. "We're the pros, but we sure learned a lot from both of them."

Peterman, for her part, marvels at how Fillinger, Robertson, and their staffs "could pick up so completely on our aesthetics. They'd give us lots of options and ideas as well as open, frank estimates on costs." Since Peterman was home pregnant with Ada during the construction process, she could be on hand for daily problem solving. Ada was already

Notable features

- The main house artfully joins an artists' studio, three-car garage, and outdoor work and play areas.
- A 4 kW solar photovoltaic panel array provides renewable electricity to the house, while solar thermal panels provide most of the hot water for the house during the warm season.
- All the cabinetry and some beautiful stairs were harvested from an old black oak on the property that was felled by a storm.
- A huge stainless steel counter and restaurant sink was repurposed as a perfect artist's messy workshop sink.
- White membrane roofing reflects most of the sun's summer heat.
- An efficient wood-burning stove provides supplemental heat for the coldest days of winter.
- Concrete slab flooring with embedded radiant heat tubing stores heat from both the sun and the geothermal system, then reradiates this heat to the space when needed.
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Trails wind through the 30-acre grounds surrounding the home.



born by the time Six Degrees was hired. But either Tim or Sarah was still on-site almost every day. "When things came up we had the opportunity to all meet, discuss, and move quickly on our decisions," she says. "That was a level of personal involvement I loved."

"They were very available clients," Fillingier agrees. "All the elements of this home came together like a perfect symphony." ■

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