

Pavilion becomes relaxing shelter

By Anh-Minh Le
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It's often referred to as the first rule of real estate: location, location, location. Never mind if the property itself is in terrible condition — as was the case when Chris Dressel set foot on a nearly 5-acre plot in the bucolic town of Woodside.

"Everything was in disrepair," he recalls. "The barn was falling down, the interior and exterior of the house was dreadful, there were horse fences and paddocks strewn across the entire property with large piles of manure and hordes of weeds growing everywhere."

Yet Dressel and his wife, Liz, were able to overlook all of those things, which could be fixed over time. The home's primary saving grace? "The view captivated both of us," he says of the vistas of the western hills.

Upon purchasing the property more than eight years ago, the couple enlisted the help of Russ Dotter of the Oakland architecture and design practice Dotter and Solfeld; he took on the task of siting and designing a new house. He also devised a plan for the future residence's surroundings — including an overhaul of the agrarian parcel's original barn, the addition of a pool pavilion, and the relocation of a horse barn, chicken coop and storage sheds.

While the main house has yet to be replaced by what Dressel describes as a "beautiful modern farmhouse," the rest of Dotter's master plan has been fulfilled, right down to the bocce ball court, inside and outside showers, fire pit and hammock.

Dotter allowed the home's setting to guide him. "We wanted to take advantage of the incredible



The pool pavilion features indoor and outdoor seating areas that share a double-sided fireplace.

The timber, concrete and stone of the pavilion evoke the lodges built during the Depression.

DESIGN

Russ Dotter, Dotter & Solfeld Architecture + Design; (510) 530-9231.

Arterra LLP, Landscape Architects; www.arterraillp.com

views and the beautiful mature oak trees," he says.

Of the 900-square-foot pool pavilion, he says, "We wanted the structure to feel open and airy, yet create a comfortable, relaxing shelter for the family." The architect took an understated approach, ensuring that the stunning backdrop continues to be a focal point. Composed mainly of heavy timbers, concrete and stone, the poolside building is "reminiscent of the WPA moun-

tain lodges built during the Depression," says Dotter.

It features indoor and outdoor seating areas that share a grand double-sided fireplace, as well as a covered kitchen and dining table that make it ideal for entertaining year-round. A circular chandelier outfitted with Edison lightbulbs lends a slightly industrial touch to the interior. Furniture with woven and iron finishes add texture, while cushions in shades of blue, cream and khaki create a sense of casual comfort. The same soothing color palette carries into the open-air lounge, which can be enclosed — and protected from the wind — by simply sliding the grommeted drapes shut.

Vera Gates of the San Fran-

cisco firm Arterra was brought in to devise a landscape scheme that would complement Dotter's vision. "This was such an interesting site to design — with all of the oak trees, the complexity of grades, the sight lines and the architecture," says Gates. "It is so rewarding to see it built and look so stunning."

The landscape designer implemented terraced gardens that are a mix of grasses, phormiums and perennials such as penstemon and salvias.

The overall effect is a getaway that is just sandstone-paved steps below the main house.

"During the spring and summer, it is a real treat to swim, barbecue, hang out and just enjoy the total outdoors," says Chris Dressel. (The residence is also home to the Dressels' four daughters, two dogs, five cats, three horses and 11 chickens.) "Amazingly, we do use the space during the winter months, too. On the weekends, if it's not too cold in the mornings, we will make some coffee and sit around the fireplace with newspapers and enjoy the quiet time together."

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