

PACIFICNW

The Seattle Times

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Fall Design 2013

ELEGANCE THAT SUITS BOTH SITES AND SITUATIONS

LOPEZ ISLAND:

Cozy wrapped in glass

SAN JUAN ISLAND:

A sturdy beauty on a bluff

WASHINGTON PARK:

Built for books and kids

QUEEN ANNE HILL:

A new take on Old World charm

SAINBRIDGE ISLAND:

A full house, fit for all ages



Camped On The Bluff

Sturdy and elegant, a home becomes one with its setting

BY REBECCA TEAGARDEN | PHOTOS BY BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER

The home, built in 2001 by Dan Lowe of Dan Lowe Construction, was designed by architect George Suyama. Landscape design by Bruce Hinckley. The 225-square-foot bunker, the guest bedroom, sits apart from the home. "(Architectural historian) Grant Hildebrand calls it a geode," says homeowner Fran McAdams. "It's hard on the outside, and you crack it open and it's beautiful on the inside."



Shown from a distance, it's easy to see how the roofline of the home mimics the windswept seaside landscape. "What's interesting about it is, unlike our normal house in Seattle, we don't take it for granted," says Scott McAdams. Says his wife, Fran, "It's a piece of art. There's an endless attraction about the place."

ANGIE WANDERS the bluff, offshore winds whipping her white hair, the stubborn seaside grasses and a few barren trees that grow in a shirk from the constant beating. Far below her, waves crash into boulders the size of Volkswagens, and the rain comes in an angry spit. Angie, lost in thought, hardly seems to notice.

Sounds like the opening to a Harlequin romance. Somewhere on the rugged coast of Scotland perhaps. But it's not. Angie is Fran and Scott McAdams' dog, and she's just outside their door on San Juan Island.

"The Cutler pig was killed about half a mile over there," Scott says. From inside his cabin most contemporary and cozy he's pointing at American Camp, the national historical park next door. And referring to the unfortunate critter that ▶



The open living space encompasses the landscape outside with walls of glass and sliders that open toward the park. The table is from Gulassa. The table lamp is by George Suyama.

Closets are hidden along the entrance hall to the home, which features heated concrete floors. The tunnel-like entry is an intimate transition between the elements outside and the wide-open space beyond.



* CAMPED ON THE BLUFF

in 1859 almost triggered a war between the United States and Great Britain.

But that was then. And this, this sculpture of a home in concrete, blackened steel, gray-washed cedar and zinc, is now. The concrete wall that runs the length of the home (and beyond) shielding views of nearby neighbors. Walls of glass to the east and south catching water and meadow. Long, open living space separated from the bedroom by a white cube (containing the bathroom). The living space dominated by a contemporary king's table 20 feet ▶



The master bedroom sits tucked behind a cube that holds the bathroom and offers separation from the rest of the home.

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* CAMPED ON THE BLUFF



The home arches its eyebrow of a roof toward American Camp. The bunker in the distance is the guest room, 225 square feet.

long, once a downed Doug fir more than 400 years old. The zinc roof arching its eyebrow at American Camp and emulating the slope of the land out front.

"We gave him nothing: This is all George," Fran says, her credit to their architect, George Suyama of Suyama Peterson Deguchi. And for the most part, that's true. The couple, however, did have two requests: Small. And private.

"George was the only person who understood small. It's a rectangle with a massive amount of detail, basically," Fran says of their island home, 1,125 square feet; the guest bedroom, 225 square feet, set apart in its own concrete bunker. The bedroom closet in the main house is built into the cedar-sided wall there. Bathroom sinks, pulls, fir cabinets are the same throughout. "It's relaxing," Fran says of the unity.

The McAdams' home is not new. It has sat here in the earth since 2001, house and land in league by the sea. "We love it because it is aging. We're living with the wabi sabi aesthetic of encroaching nature," Fran says.

"George has such an eye. It's amazing sometimes the things we notice." With that she points out the placement and selection of screws in the cedar wall of a secret passageway connecting the master bedroom and private courtyard.

"We didn't know what we wanted," Fran says. "But we knew we didn't want normal."

The McAdams tell the story of a time before this house (the previous one was donated to the San Juan County Fire Department). When Suyama and landscape architect Bruce Hinckley "cased the joint."

"George asked us, 'Whar do you like about the old house?'" Scott says. "We said that we like being close to the ground. And he said, 'So you want to be close to the grass?' And Hinckley pulled his collar up and said, 'So you don't want to see any of these houses, just the park and the water.'" Exactly.

Over the years, time has been spent reading, napping and walking, walking and walking; identifying plants and animals in their path.

Now conversations go like so:

"Look, it's a harrier, isn't it?"

"No."

"Yes."

"No."

Fran laughs. "We do this all day long here." ☺

Rebecca Teagarden writes about architecture and design for Pacific NW magazine. Benjamin Benschneider is a magazine staff photographer.



Scott and Fran particularly love to spend winter days here, next to the fire. The more harsh the weather, the better. "The winters are so special up here," Fran says. Says Suyama of the design: "The concrete walls became the foundation walls to help ground the house. You want the one material to come up out of the ground to create the enclosure."



Steppingstones, set before a water feature, provide a pathway from the main house to the guest bunker.



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