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Seeing The Sound

Rebecca Teagarden

The crunch of pea gravel announces a visitor. Wylie, a rusty blur of Norwich terrier fur, rockets toward the noise like a hopped-up mop without a handle. And then the door opens. The greeting is by Puget Sound itself; a big grin of a view from Space Needle to Bainbridge Island.

"I love houses!" says its owner, Anita, explaining how she and her husband, David, got here, tucked into a corner of Lower Queen Anne in a 1950s rambler just remodeled by Suyama Peterson Deguchi Architects. Their kids had grown up, moved out, and this couple was moving on.

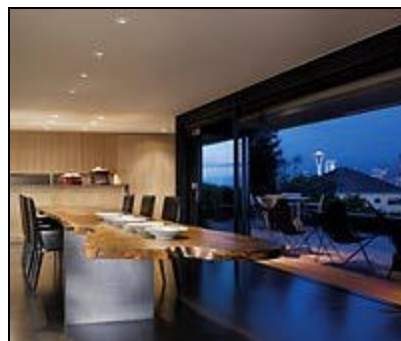
"We did the middle-age thrash," she says. "We moved five times in three years! From the south end of Mercer Island to a New York-style loft right in the middle of Fremont. And you know what? We are too old for that.

"That's why we moved to Queen Anne," she says, blue eyes sparkling. "It's as silent as a tomb here."

Silent and lovely.

Two private courtyards, a new, expansive great room and large ipe deck with glass folding doors that, when open, almost make Sound and sky seem part of the interiors. Floating blackened-steel shelves on light walls throughout make David's massive book collection appear lighter than air.

The large open space is united by a grand stretch of reclaimed Western walnut, 16 feet long, fashioned into a table by furniture maker Stewart Wurtz. With a live edge that honors the old tree it was, it links kitchen on the east to living room on the west. Wurtz also crafted the contemporary pickled-oak kitchen cabinets, which cloak everything, even the stove exhaust vent and ovens.



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"When they bought the house it was chopped up into all these little rooms," says project architect Jay Deguchi. "Anita wanted to have this fantastic house for partying," especially for Thanksgiving dinner. Furniture maker Stewart Wurtz helped out by creating a dramatic 16-foot walnut table with a "live" (natural) edge.



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The massive reclaimed walnut dining table, by Stewart Wurtz with a blackened-steel base by Tod Von Merten of Von Mertens Metalworks, is the tie that binds the east end of the home, the kitchen, with the west end, the living room. The chairs, leather with a steel spring back, are from Design Within Reach.

One bedroom, one the main floor, makes this a place cozy for two. The entire package, built by flip builders, is wrapped in that elegant contemporary calm for which Suyama Peterson Deguchi, and in this case project architect Jay Deguchi, is noted. Landscape designers Allworth-Nussbaum tied home to earth, simplifying the lot and adding natural screening in bamboo and Mexican orange (*choisya ternata*).

"We had to design around the few things we wanted to keep," Anita says, "a Glenn Richards table, a Guy Anderson painting and my husband's books." Plus African drums, Japanese chests, an Indonesian daybed, a dugout.

From 4,000 square feet of classic Northwest contemporary by Ralph Anderson to 1,700 square feet of Suyama Peterson Deguchi sleek, Anita is delighted to say they are home for good.

"My husband and I took a blood oath," she says. "The next move for me is into a pine box!" When Anita is passionate about something, exclamation marks are required. And she is very passionate about this house.

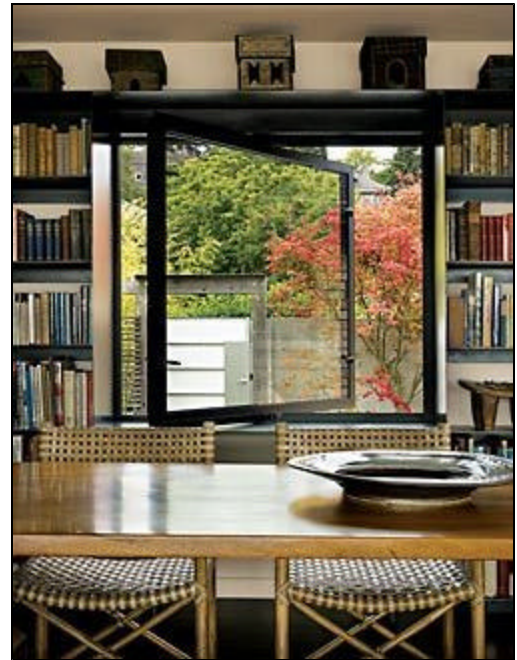
"I make jewelry and quilts and all kinds of things. And I've always been in a garage or basement or spare space," she says. "But not here!"

No, indeed. Downstairs is a matching 1,700 square feet of crafter's heaven, along with a guest room. Anita and David have one car, a biodiesel-fueled Volkswagen Beetle. He walks to work at his green-energy technology company. Low VOC paints coat the walls, and many doors and other materials already in the home were used again.

"We are one of the few 1950s ramblers that hasn't been torn down and built up," Anita says of the home that formerly belonged to architect Lane Williams. "This was a wonderful house. Lane had remodeled it into the early 1990s. They passed it on to us, and we just made it our own."

With plans to stay put, "I can just see me and my husband in our walkers here!" says Anita, spreading her arm across the expanse of ebony-stained oak, free of rugs. She is wearing lime-green Keens and is far from needing aid to get anywhere.

"This is it," she says of their eighth Seattle house in 28 years. "I don't even go to open houses anymore. It's too dangerous!"



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The 4-by-4-foot window over the work table in the living room frames the entry courtyard. The shelves hold, of course, books, but also a collection of betelnut boxes.



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The living room doubles as David's library. "David wanted this cozy living-room feeling, and to have it lined with his books and a fireplace, where he could work and have a view," architect Jay Deguchi says. The piece over the fireplace is by Anne Siems. Decorative Metal Arts and Michael Rydinski fabricated all the blackened steel in the home.

Rebecca Teagarden is assistant editor of Pacific Northwest magazine. Benjamin Benschneider is a magazine staff photographer.

Putting the ramble in rambler

The rambler has great bones, it just has too many of them, says Jay Deguchi of Suyama Peterson Deguchi Architects.

"It's about opening it up." Typically the kitchen, dining and living are all separate, and that makes it very difficult to entertain.

"A lot of it is the windows. Oftentimes the windows are individual instead of trying to create an expanse.

"And a unified floor helps. We make all floors the same in the open areas."

But, he cautions, "there's work you don't see above the ceiling. And anytime you do something more modern and clean there's added cost because the precision takes more time and effort. But it's worth it in the end."

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"Anita wanted something that was very calm," Deguchi says. "This is the entry courtyard, but from a different vantage point." The blackened-steel floating bookshelves appear in every room. Over the bed are a bamboo undershirt, purchased at Honeychurch Antiques, and a child's dugout from New Guinea.



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"What happens when shelves are wood, you start reading the cabinetry as much as reading the books. It's a much more dominant element. We kept trying to reduce everything back and make the books and the tansu the important thing," Deguchi says. Anita figures David's collection is now "down" to about 3,000 volumes.