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## String of pearls

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Dwarfed by pine trees, this house is respectful of its environment in more ways than one

Where we spent our childhood can have a profound effect on where and how we choose to live as adults. The owners of this home, who grew up in a forest environment, wanted their children to experience the joys of living close to nature. So they commissioned architect Tom Kundig of Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects to design the house featured here.

Kundig says the home runs along the top of a hogback ridge that parallels the course of the forest stream below. "I would describe it as a series of rooms that follow each other along the ridge, much like a string of pearls."

Surrounded by 40 acres of Ponderosa pine trees and rolling farmland, the house was carefully designed to be as transparent as possible to the trees and valleys below.

"Glazing opens the house out on three sides to the ridge. Combined with a long, narrow floor plan, this means the owners are constantly aware of what's happening on either side of the house. Looking mid-story to the trees creates the feeling of being up in a treehouse," says Kundig.

The theme of connecting the design with its natural environment is clearly demonstrated in the glazed, open-plan living area that sits suspended over a valley.

"This part of the house leaps over a depression in the ridge, as if floating across the top of it. The proportions of the windows and the structure pick up the rhythm of the pine forest beyond so that it almost disappears," says Kundig.

Exterior cladding materials were also selected as a reference to the forest. Rattlesnake Ridge basalt and tightknot fir and cedar provide contrasting earthy textures.

"To meet the owners' wishes for an environmentally friendly home, we've used as much tightknot, or second growth wood, as possible," says the architect.

Climate conditions also influenced the look of the house. Wide eaves effectively shed snow away from the house in winter. The wide eaves also shade the home in summer when temperatures soar, accommodating the area's semi-arid climate. Boulders help pave the way to the front entry which is indicated by a large canopy. A sheet of stainless hangs from slim, stainless steel rods to create another canopy just above the door. "The elegant little whisper of a canopy helps scale down a 17ft-high mass, its delicate lines a contrast to the muscular structure," says Kundig.

A short flight of stairs takes you from the entry foyer into the expansive living area. At the far end of the room, sofas are grouped around a massive basalt fireplace. A grand piano acts as a subtle division between this intimate area and the dining suite. Contained in a mahogany box at the other end of the room is the kitchen.

"The owners wanted the overall living area to feel relatively formal yet still maintain a connection with the kitchen," says



Located on top of a steep ridge, this house blends into its forest landscape.



Piers made of local basalt stone support the structure and follow the contours of the land.

Kundig.

To keep the focus on the forest views, the kitchen has clean, uncluttered lines. The master bedroom, on the second floor, sits in a partially cantilevered box. Here, ceiling rafters are intentionally low to preserve a sense of intimacy, while a platform bed has been built to face the forest landscape. From this space, the owners can commute via a bridge to their office, in a detached wood-clad pavilion.

**Resource List:**

Architect: Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects (Seattle, WA)

Interior designer: Agnes Bourne

Builder: Gutman Construction

Structural engineer: Monte Clark Engineering

Siding: Stone veneer, cedar siding in a horizontal, custom-milled profile with custom stain color

Roof: Weathered copper

Windows/doors: Quantum Windows and Doors

Flooring: Brazilian cherry

Lighting: Lightolier track lighting

Furniture: Custom by Agnes Bourne

Cabinets: Mahogany veneer by JE Cabinets

Cooktop: Thermador

Ventilation: Vent-A-Hood teamed with a custom surround

Shower fittings: Dornbracht (master bath) Grohe (other baths)

Toilet: Kohler (master bath)

Photography by Paul Warchol and Lara Swimmer



The living, dining and kitchen area is contained in one large space with floor-to-ceiling windows. Track lighting, interspersed between double ceiling rafters, can be adjusted to create different moods.



A basalt fireplace is a feature both inside and outside.



Mahogany, chosen for its warm color, is a feature in the kitchen. Recessed lighting, clean-lined cabinetry and a simple, functional layout help to keep the emphasis on the views.



In the master bedroom, a customized bed incorporates side tables and a handy ledge for holding clothes and other objects. Through a door at the far end of the space is a bridge that leads to a home office.



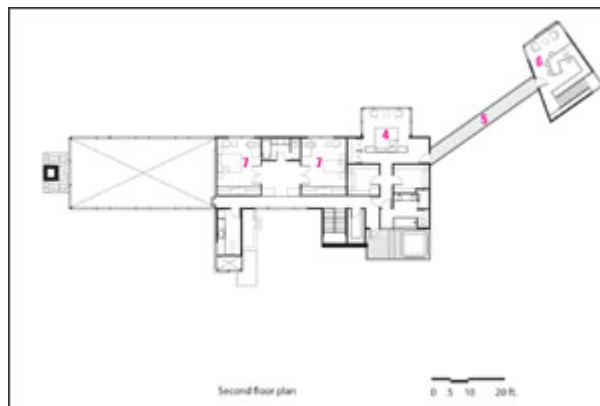
A chunky stainless steel tub is a feature in the master bathroom.



The main living area appears to float over a dip in the ridge. Lighting amongst the grass and boulders highlights the natural landscape at night.



Legend for entry level plan: 1 entry foyer, 2 kitchen, 3 living and dining.



Legend for second floor plan: 4 master bedroom, 5 bridge, 6 office, 7 bedroom.