



# california

HOME+DESIGN

# 2007

CH+D AWARDS







Aidlin Darling design team

**JOSHUA AIDLIN, DAVID DARLING,  
PETER LARSEN**  
AIDLIN DARLING DESIGN, SAN FRANCISCO

Legend has it that the moon rises seven times a night over Sonoma's geographically disorienting Valley of the Moon, the hills eclipsing the moon time and again as you move through the valley. So when Joshua Aidlin, David Darling and project architect Peter Larsen set about planning a rural estate at the base of Sonoma Mountain, they played with the legend of the elusive moon in the design process.

"As you drive up the hill to the house, we created a very carefully choreographed sequence of views," says Darling. "Though the house is pretty big [14,000 square feet], it has a modest profile. There's actually a point where you completely lose your view of it, and then it comes back into sight as you enter the car court."

The owners, a San Francisco couple, had once lived in a stone house on Lake Michigan. They wanted their Sonoma home, located on a 140-acre working vineyard, to have the same monastic quality and sense of permanence. In response to the couple's genuine interest in cartography, the architects sited the limestone-and-glass structure on a true-north axis, with the broad side oriented to the east and west, and the narrow side facing north and south. "The house acts as a mapping device on the property," says Darling. "In the morning you get the sunrise and passive solar-heat gain, and as the day progresses, the sun moves across the south sky and you get these great fingers of light that penetrate the narrow side of the house. In the afternoon, when it can get very hot,




PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN SUTTON



The house's two wings are connected by a glass bridge, which contains the entrance on the first level, with a dining room and a gallery above.

CH+D AWARD FOR  
**RESIDENTIAL  
ARCHITECTURE**  
(OVER 3,000 SQ. FT.)





*"You have a sense that you're floating."*

Glass, stone and steel predominate in the interiors. Bookcases and windows framed in mahogany add warmth.





ABOVE: The halls of the stairway double as gallery spaces for the owners' extensive collection of art and objects collected during their travels. LEFT AND BELOW: Reclaimed Indonesian teak alternates with limestone on the floors.





Garden designer Marta Fry extended the geometry of the house with rows of hornbeam trees in the landscape, which also echo the pattern of the vineyards.

the sun is eclipsed by Sonoma Mountain, so the house itself is in shade. It becomes almost a timepiece."

The house is composed of two wings and several layers of indoor and outdoor spaces, with the main entrance in the middle. "Everything vectors off of the entry hall in a sort of cinematic unfolding of view and space," explains Darling. "We tried not to give everything up at once, so while you can construct the house as you walk through it, you never actually experience the whole of it in one place."

Common spaces, including the living room and kitchen, are located in the wing facing the vineyards, while the bedrooms are in the other wing, which burrows into the hillside. The dining room bridges the two wings, with large pivoting glass doors that open to an outdoor terrace. A footpath, running parallel to the dining area, leads from the vineyard to the wine cellar dug into the hill. "We half-jokingly call this progression from vineyard to wine cellar to dining table the 'path of life,'" says Darling.

The materials used represent another way of mapping the various sections of the house. "Even the sound of walking from one space to another transforms the experience," Darling says. The gallery that connects the private wing to the common spaces is a long, contemplative walk, with a reclaimed-teak floor laid on sleepers that give it a lightness underfoot—creating the feeling of walking on a bridge. By contrast, the limestone floors in the bedrooms are set on steel frames and feel very solid. "When you walk through the gallery, you have a sense that you're floating," Darling explains. "Then when you step onto the limestone in the bedrooms, you feel grounded again as the house retreats back into the hill."

Thanks to this skillful manipulation of proportion, light and materials, the architecture has a modesty and warmth that belies the size of the house, and is in keeping with the owners' request for simplicity as well as the workaday aspect of the vineyard, which produces Cabernet grapes.

Besides the main house, the architects and owners have also built a barn and a rammed-earth guesthouse on the property during their seven-plus years of collaboration. "The owners are like family to me," says Darling. "They brought an incredible vision to the process and





Deep overhangs keep the pool terrace cool in the heat of the day. The views look across the vineyards to the Valley of the Moon.