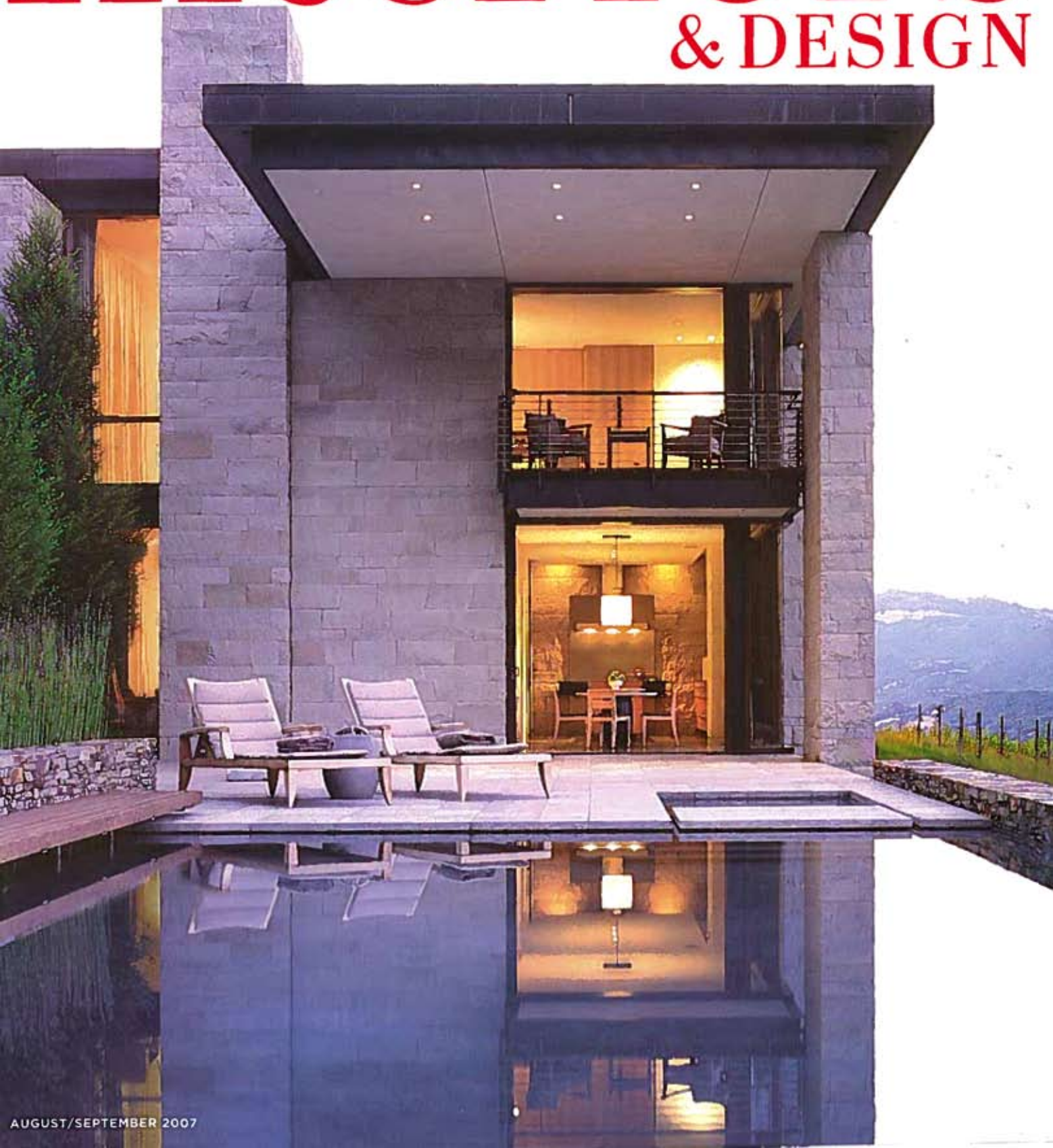


WESTERN Interiors & DESIGN





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FROM RUSTIC TO CONTEMPORARY,
ARCHITECTURE IN THE WEST IS SETTING
THE PACE FOR IMAGINATIVE LIVING

VINEYARD REFLECTION

Layering stone, steel and water, Aidlin Darling Design
refreshes the Northern California wine-country palette
photography by Matthew Millman/text by Reed Wright



JOHN SUTTON

A house of sandstone, steel, copper and glass designed by architects David Darling and Joshua Aidlin is nestled between a forest and a vineyard at the base of Sonoma Mountain in the Northern California wine country of Glen Ellen. The entry level is accessed through a gravel-lined car court. **opening page:** Steel-framed glass pivot doors to the central terrace.





WE THOUGHT of it as a found ruin of heavy split-face sandstone blocks in which we inserted, story by story, a hierarchy of lighter and lighter materials,” says architect David Darling of a house he and his partner, Joshua Aidlin, created in the wine country of Glen Ellen, California. The area where the house is situated was named the Valley of the Seven Moons by the local Native Americans because the rolling terrain gave the impression of seven different moons rising over the surrounding mountains. Darling and Aidlin wanted to invest their design with similar lore. The house’s stone shell conveys another age but incorporates modernist elements, too, and its slender steel frames and glass walls lend the house an ephemeral quality while allowing for panoramic views.

Materials such as crunchy gravel in the entry courtyard and hollow-sounding wood decking on the bridge to the entry serve

as devices that subtly announce visitors. Likewise, Italian and Portuguese limestone in the living areas and wood and carpeted flooring in and around the bedrooms subtly signal transitions from the public wings to the private ones. With 14,500 square feet of space, this house is certainly large, but two distinct wings that are hidden from view at the end of a long, curved driveway help maintain a sense of intimacy.

“A lot of our firm’s work is an exercise in camouflage,” says Darling. The H-plan house is bisected by a long twelve-foot-wide reflecting pool. The double-height public wing faces the vineyard and is laid out as two unequal bars. A longer two-story bedroom wing rests above a Louis Kahn-esque colonnaded loggia that is nestled into the base of Sonoma Mountain. A dining room, with floor-to-ceiling glass walls, bridges the reflecting pool and connects the two wings, which access a swimming pool on the lower level and private mountainside gardens designed by Marta Fry.

above: The architects created an elongated reflecting pool as an axis for the house. The glass dining room bridges the reflecting pool and connects the public wing, which looks to the vineyards, to the two-story bedroom wing. **opposite, clockwise from top left:** A lower-level hallway—with Portuguese limestone flooring and split-face sandstone walls—threads the library, living room, central terrace, dining room, kitchen and family room. The reflecting pool stepping stones provide passage from the loggia of the bedroom wing to the pool terrace. Aidlin designed a console for the dining hall, which is accented by grided mahogany pocket doors. Armchairs from Kneidler-Fauchère, covered with Great Plains fabric, flank a sculptural fireplace in the living room.





The romance of a vineyard house can be lost when you encounter the daily dust and dirt of its agricultural setting. To temper those aspects of the site, Darling and project designer Peter Larsen limited much of the outdoor access to protected poolside gardens off the breakfast room and a white flower landscape—designed as a space in which to walk on moonlit nights—off the master suite.

Partly because of the owners' interest in cartography and partly because California grapevines were afflicted by disease at about the time the project was started a decade ago, Darling and Larsen had rows of grapevines replanted in a true north-south, east-west pattern. By aligning the house to the vineyard grid, they have subliminally meshed the living spaces with the cinematic setting.

Much of the house faces east so that the morning light penetrates the rooms when it is cooler. But in the afternoon, says Darling, "when you want relief from the heat, the mountain eclipses the sun and puts the house in shade." Service areas such as the kitchen, the pantry and the baths are centrally located. To emphasize the viticultural storyline, a path from the eastern vineyards leads to steel-and-glass doors and through the center of the house to a western cellar that is burrowed into the hillside.


The architects designed certain features and furnishings in the interest of green design. In the dining area, you can open the walls to the reflecting pool, which provides passive cooling; in winter, the pool serves as a solar heat sink. A geothermal heating and cooling system saves energy. Concealable photovoltaic roof panels are planned to facilitate solar power. Water from the reflecting pool is circulated to heat the swimming pool and in the future may be redirected to warm floors through an alternative radiant-heat system.

The estate-like residence is grand but not imposing. The architects achieved that balance by modulating spaces with lowered ceiling heights, natural textures and a soft, muted palette. And like any good building, this house accentuates the beauty of its surrounding landscape. "The design quietly enhances the relationship of indoor and outdoor spaces," says Darling. "We wanted to capture the serene spirit of this place." +

opposite: The reflecting pool appears to run beneath the glassed-in dining room; the entry is above. **above right:** "A sliding glass door serves as an overscaled window and opens the living room to the vineyard," says Darling. A cubed bronze side table by Robert Graham complements a Holly Hunt Collection sofa. A suede-bound Karastan rug adds texture; the draperies are from Horner & Company. **below right:** A chandelier from Sand Studios hangs above a reclaimed white-oak table, created by Aidlin, and chairs designed by Christian Liaigre for the Holly Hunt Collection. The rug is from ABC Carpet & Home.







opposite, clockwise from top left: Photographs by Bernd and Hilla Becher hang on English oak paneling in the living room, where a chaise longue from Limn and a petrified wood side table create a warm, modern feeling. A glass cosmos model from Amsterdam rests on a gnarled wood table in front of the living room window, which is filled with a vineyard view. A floor-to-ceiling window offsets a sandstone fireplace in the family room. A four poster by Catherine Memmi and armchairs, upholstered with Great Plains fabric, and a wood side table from Kneedler-Fauchère are in the master suite. **this page:** Darling and Aidlin wanted the master bath to be a “reflective space that gracefully accommodates daily rituals,” Darling explains. The Agape tub and the Neidhardt pendant help to maintain a minimalist aesthetic.

"The double-height living room has large windows that overlook the vineyard," says Darling. "We wanted to balance the materiality of the stone walls with a feeling of transparency and lightness."







By aligning the house with the VINEYARD GRID, the architects have subliminally meshed the LIVING SPACES with the setting.

opposite, top: The architects customized white-oak cabinetry with brushed stainless-steel-plate countertops for the kitchen. The cooktop, vent hood and ovens are from Gaggenau. **opposite, bottom:** A table and chairs from the Holly Hunt Collection are in the breakfast room, which is just off the pool terrace. **this page:** "The deep cantilevered roof of the public wing shades the pool terrace and large expanses of glass on warm evenings," Darling explains.

