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HOME BUILDER / STEPH LYNCH, HAMMER & HAND
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / STEVE SHAPIRO, SHAPIRO DIDWAY LLC



FARM FRESH

A LOS ANGELES FAMILY SEEKS A WEEKEND
GETAWAY IN OREGON THAT'S IN TUNE WITH
ITS BUCOLIC SURROUNDINGS.

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Los Angeles architect Christopher Kempel takes his research seriously. When a Southern California-based family asked him to design a rustic home in the forested hills of Oregon’s Willamette Valley, he spent several nights on the property staying in its original farmhouse, contemplating how the new residence should be oriented to the site. “It was almost like a live model,” he says. “You could see where the sun comes up, how it enters a room and how the sunset affects the light.” The experiment provided the ideal impetus to push Kempel out of his comfort zone. “The truth is, we hadn’t been asked to do a home like this before,” says the architect, who is known for creating warm modern dwellings with large picture windows, exposed steel framing and smooth, refined surfaces. Kempel was admittedly in new territory design-wise. “They challenged us,” he says.

To tackle the project, the architect teamed up with designer Alana Homesley, who’d worked with Kempel on their clients’ primary residence in Los Angeles. They both saw opportunities to weave modernism into a traditionally rooted design that recalled the small, white farmhouse that originally stood on the 82-acre property—a working farm where wild grasses are harvested. “There was this little white house with the field sweeping up to it, and it was absolutely beautiful,” the wife says. “We essentially wanted to build a more modern version of that same image.” Kempel’s mission was to create a home whose exterior followed the rules of traditional farmhouse architecture: small regularly spaced windows, pitched rooflines, stone chimneys and a wide veranda. Unlike modern architecture, where large windows frame the spaces beyond them, Kempel was challenged to create a symmetrical exterior that

Opposite: Simple forms define the entry to a Willamette Valley home by architect Christopher Kempel. The front door opens to the main house on the left, while a low-slung structure extends past the garage/guesthouse toward the wife’s glass-enclosed writer’s studio. A sculpture by Wendell Dayton stands amid plantings designed by landscape architect Steve Shapiro.

Below: Designer Alana Homesley placed a Remains Lighting pendant in the entry along with a custom spalted-maple console and mirror, both made by Sergio Raynal Fine Custom Woodworking. The cedar ceiling and siding is by Creative Woodworking NW.





In the living room, a basalt wall by Rael and a timber super-frame emphasize the farmhouse feel of the residence, as does the Tuell and Reynolds lamp with a bronze waxed finish. Ochre chandeliers add a delicate contrast. Jerry Pair leather dresses the lounge chairs, while the Modernica Papa Bear chair and ottoman and a custom sectional all sport Kerry Joyce velvets. A Jim Thompson material covers the BDDW sofa. Grounding the room is a Victoria Hagan carpet.



looks fairly indifferent to the function of the interior. “You’re constantly pushing and pulling and finessing the interior plan so it works with the exterior to look properly balanced,” the architect says. At the same time, he also had to position the exterior to look balanced with the interior plan.

The home’s L-shaped design evolved around three massive stone piers, inspired by Kempel’s New England upbringing where he would often see stone-chimney relics from long-gone structures. “Everything is built off those main pieces,” he says of this interpretation. “We really enjoyed the connection between the timber frame and the stone masses.”

As the interior layout took shape, a modern sensibility emerged from those rustic materials, especially in the central, two-story living room, where timber framing mingles with steel joinery, delicate glass chandeliers balance the heavy stone wall, and a metal-framed open-riser stair takes center

stage. “Our struggle from day one was to understand the mix of rustic-traditional with clean-modern,” Homesley says. She pursued that mix first in the home’s finishes. Instead of painting the paneled ceilings white, she whitewashed them. Instead of choosing smooth concrete for the kitchen floor, she chose a mottled limestone. “Nothing was the cleanest version it could be,” she says. “We tried to have texture in all the materials.” Homesley then put a twist on classic farmhouse furnishings: The wingback chair next to the fireplace is a playful Papa Bear chair; the tufted-back sofa has hand-turned walnut arms and blackened-bronze feet; the canopy bed in the master suite eschews fabric draping for a spare frame of wood and metal. “It’s exactly what we were trying to achieve, which is a mix of old and new,” the designer explains.

The wife encouraged Kempel to take a more modern approach for her glass-house writer’s studio at the end of a breezeway behind the garage and guesthouse. The

Big Branch Woodworking fabricated the kitchen’s cabinetry, which is dressed with RH hardware. Troscan barstools offer seating at the butcher-block topped island lit with pendants from Huniford Design Studio in New York. Quartzite from Stone Source in Los Angeles tops the perimeter counters. Both the Waterworks apron sink and the Rohl undermount sink have Waterworks faucets. The refrigerator is Sub-Zero; the range is Wolf.



A custom light fixture by Apparatus bestows drama to the dining area without blocking the views. Homesley designed the table, benches and host chairs. Underfoot is limestone tile from Exquisite Surfaces in Beverly Hills.



Kempel envisioned the hallway to the wife's studio as a porch that had been glassed in. The structural glass is a custom system by Sierra Pacific, installed under the direction of builder Steph Lynch. Nautic sconces light the space.



A suspended Ergofocus fireplace by Focus anchors the wife's thoroughly modern studio. Mokum fabric envelops the custom sofa. Adjacent is a vintage lounge chair from Hudson Supermarket in Hudson, New York. Resting on the polished concrete floor by N.L. Jacobsen is a vintage Moroccan rug. The coffee table is from Design Within Reach.



Above: Dyadic Iron Works crafted the metal elements of the home's staircase; the structure adds modern impact to the farmhouse design. Cascading pendants by John Pomp Studios hang over a corner nook where the owners' children do homework.

Right: A fixture by The Urban Electric Co. brings light to the master bedroom. From the window seat, with cushions in a Holland & Sherry faux-suede, stunning views of the surrounding landscape can be glimpsed through windows outfitted with shades by The Shade Store. Ashbury Hides leather covers the custom chair and ottoman. The bed is by Holly Hunt.





The master bathroom features Waterworks tile on the walls and hexagonal tile from Walker Zanger in Los Angeles on the floor. Homesley chose them in pale shades to keep the space light and airy. The Whitehaus sinks with Waterworks faucets amplify the rustic aesthetic. Above is a light from The Urban Electric Co.; underfoot is a Pottery Barn carpet.

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transition begins off the entry with a corridor lined in the home's exterior tongue-and-groove siding. "We've created a metaphorical history," Kempel says, "as if it were an outside porch that's just been glassed in." The effect wasn't easy to achieve, the project's superintendent Steph Lynch says. "The exterior siding wraps into this space as one continuous line down its back wall. This detail required perfect alignment and precision craftsmanship to segue the lines from outside to inside."

Since the family uses the home as a weekend retreat, the landscape needed to be low maintenance, drought tolerant and deer proof, explains landscape architect

Steve Shapiro. Masses of ornamental-grass varieties fit the bill. "We wanted to have a contemporary look to enhance the house but also be somewhat understated to fit in with the organic setting," he says.

In that respect, Kempel also played to the home's natural beauty, orienting the wide porches just so toward the valley side, and keeping areas like the pool and writer's studio more intimately enclosed by the old-growth fir trees in back. "There's something very sensual about the property because of the surrounding views and the fog and the quiet," Kempel says. "It's very mystical." ■

Opposite: The outdoor dining area, with a DCS barbecue, enjoys some of the property's most spectacular views, and suspended heaters allow the family to use it nearly year-round. The lantern is by Boyd Lighting; the teak table and benches are by RH.

Below: RH furnishings make for comfortable, casual spots to relax along the covered veranda that wraps around three sides of the residence. The lounge chairs have cushions covered in a Perennials fabric. The glazing is by Marvin Windows & Doors from Portland Millwork.





The central living room bisects the house allowing it to encompass sightlines of the surrounding landscape. On one side, a lush grass-filled space conceived by Shapiro yields a painterly effect. The Taylor Metal Products standing seam roof, installed by Willamette Roofing, furthers the home's rural vibe.