

Shaped by the land

No matter whether a site slopes steeply or is exposed to strong winds, with good design it's possible to tame the elements and create an appealing homestead at the same time





Pure geometry

With its clean lines and strong forms, this new home puts a contemporary spin on traditional rural architecture

Rural homes invariably have a strong connection to the land – and this house is no exception. Located on a plateau, the sloping topography of the site allows sweeping views over pastures and fields to distant mountains.

Architect Stuart Silk says these views, along with the summer sun angles and prevailing winds, determined the layout of the house.

“The plan’s geometry was generated by the intersection of two of these important axes,” he says. “This meeting point, which became the entrance to the house, is highlighted by an 18ft-high, glass-covered, circular concrete drum that



Preceding pages: Terracing this sloping rural site with precast concrete walls created an appealing pool area.

Above left and left: Designed as a series of gabled stone elements linked by transparent glass boxes, the house is highly contemporary, yet retains a sense of tradition.

Top and above: The entrance is simple, clean and uncluttered.



Top: The formal living room features a wood ceiling painted to match the walls. Corner windows further enhance the contemporary feel of the interior and open up the views beyond.

Above: A trellis-covered courtyard is sheltered from the prevailing winds.

expresses the rotational aspect of the intersection.” The circular entrance contrasts the lineal, gabled forms of the rest of the house, the shape of which was also determined by the connection with the land. Silk says that while the owner wanted a contemporary home, it was important that the design acknowledged the traditional architecture of the region.

“We visualized a home that was mindful of its rural agrarian surroundings – there are many historical stone farmhouses and barns that date back to the turn of the last century. Some of these traditional buildings are quite close to the site. We

wanted to capture that sensibility, but within a contemporary framework.”

The solution was to incorporate similar materials within a collection of traditional gabled forms, linked by glass bridges.

“Stone gables stripped of all unnecessary detail provide this home with its strong visual identity,” says Silk. “The flat-roofed glass bridges are transitional connecting spaces that create a sharp contrast, enabling the two elements to play off each other. As we developed the design, it became more and more about pure geometry and the creation of an art form than the layering of traditional details.



We felt this pared-back treatment was a more powerful way to evoke the rural aesthetic, rather than simply mimicking tradition.”

Reducing the house to its simplest form also brings a very contemporary edge to the interior. The entrance drum, while filled with light from the overhead glazing, has a spartan feel, reminiscent of a castle. The adjacent dining room has a similar ambiance – further enhanced by the acid-stained concrete flooring laid to resemble large flagstones, and the solid stone walls.

“We have brought the stone through to the inside of the building where it creates a simple,



Above: Neutral colors were chosen for the furnishings, so they wouldn't detract from the views. The tonal look is punctuated with bright accents, including this painting by Gaylen Hanson.

Left: Pre-cast concrete is a feature of both the fireplace surrounds and the kitchen. Here it is complemented by rich wenge cabinetry.



Above: As with all the rooms, the master bedroom is positioned to maximize the outlook. Interior designer Jennifer Randall has enlivened the space with a variety of textures, including the Ultrasuede drapery and a Jack Larsen bedspread fabric.

strong and tactile backdrop to the furnishings." The color of the stone helped determine the color palette of the interior. Designer Jennifer Randall says the dark gray, beige and taupe tones of the walls and furnishings evoke an earthy feel. The simple styling of the furniture also reinforces the sleek, uncluttered look. "It's a quiet backdrop that doesn't interfere with the magnificent views," Randall says. "Darker colors help to anchor the space and focus attention on the view, rather than the interior. For this reason, we have extended the colors to the ceilings in the main living areas."

Corner windows also help expand the views, opening up the interior to the great outdoors. The main living areas feature simple, painted wood ceilings that follow the gabled forms. An absence of moldings and base boards, and the introduction of pre-cast concrete fire surrounds, further reinforces the contemporary feel of the interior. "The concrete conveys the sense of a more traditional hearth – the place where the cooking would have been undertaken in years gone by," says Silk. "For this reason, we have also used pre-cast concrete to surround the cooking center in the

Top and above: The height of luxury – the master bathroom is a private retreat for the owners. It includes a freestanding Philippe Starck tub, wenge wood shelving and concealed mirror storage. The steam shower also has a custom-made concrete lounger.

Left: Light wood veneers feature in the games room.

Architect: Stuart Silk, AIA and associate architects Stan Hanson, Michael McFadden and Lauri Morrison, Stuart Silk Architects (Seattle, WA)

Interior designer:

Jennifer Randall, ASID

Structural engineer:

Andreotti & Associates

Builder: VK Powell

Kitchen manufacturer:

King Brothers Woodworking

Siding: Wisconsin Castle Stone in Buff Grey

Roof: Copper

Windows and doors: Aluminum from Kawneer Windows

Flooring: Acid-stained concrete from The Concretist

Paint: Benjamin Moore

Lighting: Juno

Drapes: VK Powell

Kitchen cabinets: Wenge with Osmo wax finish from King Brothers Woodworking

Countertops: Cordoso Stone; Oregon tile; marble

Backsplash: Bleu Beige Lapierre from Stone Pental

Sink: Kohler Verity

Faucets: Dornbracht Tara

Oven, cooktop and microwave:

Wolf

Ventilation: Thermador

Refrigerator: Sub-Zero

Dishwasher: Bosch

Bath tub: Duravit Stark

Vanity cabinetry: Wenge and stainless steel by King Brothers Woodworking

Basin: Ann Sacks from Ray's Plumbing

Bathroom faucets and shower fittings: Dornbracht Mem

Tiles: Ann Sacks

Photography by

Jamie Cobeldick

Right: A trellised outdoor living area opens from the family and living rooms. Its sheltered position means it can be used for most of the year. It also affords an extensive view of the valley and mountains.



kitchen, which is at one end of the family room.”

To provide shelter from the prevailing winds, Silk created a trellised courtyard between the family and living rooms. This creates a protected space for outdoor living for three seasons of the year.

Below, a stone wall shields a large pool area and cabana from summer winds, while strategic openings allow focused views of the landscape and the mountains.

“We used the topography to create a terraced landscape, with pre-cast concrete walls enhancing the sense of a ruin. The grass is contoured so it meets the top of the walls,” says Silk.



Above: Openings in the stone wall at one end of the pool are positioned to frame the view. The wood shutters can be closed on windy days.

Legend for plan: 1 entrance, 2 dining room, 3 kitchen and family room, 4 formal living room, 5 master bedroom, 6 master bathroom, 7 exercise room, 8 recreation/media room, 9 bedrooms, 10 upper west terrace.