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BAINBRIDGE ISLAND: Elegant environmentalism

PHINNEY RIDGE: Ker-pow through color

LAKE FOREST PARK: A Midcentury's new modern

QUEEN ANNE HILL: Comfy in cool white

ORCAS ISLAND: A future of inspired efficiency

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A two-story CMU (concrete masonry unit) wall runs across the home. "This grounding element not only provides a threshold separation between public and private, it also is the main heat sink to help stabilize temperatures and reduce the heat swings," says architect Matthew Coates. "This central gallery is the main vertical access for the home. It helps ground the whole construct."

An environmental ethic is elegantly executed

LET'S BEGIN AT the end: Joanne Ellis' favorite thing about her new home on a Seattle-facing Bainbridge Island bluff. "It's the joy of being in a space that is me. That's what a custom home should be. It should fit you like a fine-tailored suit."

You may consider Joanne and Ed Ellis to be most beautifully dressed.

The story of their home, though, certainly could have begun with the for-the-record fact that theirs is one of the first outside Seattle to achieve LEED platinum status. Wood milled on site; Re Store deconstruction of the old house; geothermal heating; earth-friendly materials; Forest Stewardship Council-approved lumber framing; FSC-certified rainscreen siding; photovoltaic systems; green roof; soy-based stain and sealant; hydronic radiant-heat floors;

rainwater harvesting; solar hot-water flat panels; heat-recovery vent; hybrid insulation system.

Even environmentalist extraordinaire/actor Ed Begley Jr. came to take a look.

But it's just that the place, 2,500 square feet finished in 2009, is so darned cool and contemporary. What stands out is the design. The elegance. The comfort. This home does not wear its sustainability on its sleeve.

Finally, modern aesthetic meets sustainable lifestyle in the finest forms of each.

"We don't have to compromise here," Ellis says. "We live in luxury."

She's not bragging. She's sharing. "The more we talk about it, maybe we'll inspire somebody else," she says.

The couple interviewed architects, and architects interviewed them. Then the

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LOOKS GREAT,



WORKS HARD

• by rebecca teagarden • photographed by benjamin benschneider

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The firepit/sculpture between the house and bluff, next to the meadow, is a buoy from a marine scrap yard. The contractor on the Ellis home was Smallwood Design & Construction on Bainbridge Island. Landscape architect was Outdoor Studio in Seattle. The energy consultant was Sun Wind Concepts on Bainbridge Island.

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Joanne Ellis calls the windows that run along the long Caesarstone counter "my air-conditioning system." The cabinetry is bamboo. The standing-seam metal siding travels inside across the kitchen and defines the TV/man cave/office/guest space.

**LOOKS GREAT,
WORKS HARD**

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Ellises chose Matthew Coates of Coates Design Architects to create their equally contemporary and sustainable project. Melissa Andersen of All in the Details worked with Ellis on the elegant interiors.

The Ellises were inquisitive, enthusiastic but, most of all, practical clients. For every element of their house they asked: How are we going to use it? Can it be recycled? And does it have two purposes? "If you can't clean it, I don't want it," Ellis says. "I use our wedding dishes. Why not? I find replacements at garage sales."

"One of my mantras is, get what you need, use what you get or give it away. I don't want to be the steward of a lot of stuff."

The open main living space flexes with the crowd. The Caesarstone (recycled quartz) kitchen counter runs the length of the house, making it also a dining-table sideboard and workbench. The TV room is a man cave, Ed's office and, pull out the pocket door, guest room. Pull the lip of the sofa and it becomes a lounger. Pull again, it's a bed. The Miele oven is also a microwave.

Sluicing through the home is a two-story CMU (concrete masonry unit) wall. It is the home's strength. The mass also heats and cools. "During the last power outage, I finally put a sweatshirt on by the end of the second day," Ellis says.

Floors downstairs are radiant concrete, cork up. The raised-seam metal siding, in a frosted pewter color, travels inside to define the TV room, runs across the kitchen wall and back outside.

The home is set for aging in place.




The bedroom looks across the water to Seattle. The bench and bookshelf are by Portland artist Donny Faris with Radius Furniture Design. "We try to honor local artists and craftsmen," Ellis says.

Necessities on one floor; upstairs office and guest room.

What you see out back, waterside, is not lawn. It's a meadow. The firepit/sculpture was formerly a buoy found at a marine scrap yard.

"Part of our journey was to encourage and support subcontractors and the people we came in contact with," Ellis says of the education that is their home. "But that practicality streak has to be part of the equation."

"I call this the common-sense house." 

Rebecca Teagarden writes about architecture for Pacific Northwest magazine. Benjamin Benschneider is a magazine staff photographer.