

# In Your Dreams



**SPECIAL SECTION**

## Vacation home is subtle but stunning

By **KELLY NIX**

**A**BOUT 600 feet above Pfeiffer Beach in Big Sur, on land with sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean, sits a house that seems to dissolve into its coastal landscape.

At 1,900 square-feet it's certainly not a mansion, but the structure, designed by Carver + Schicketanz Architects in Carmel, is a stunning marriage between its surroundings and modern design.

The home was designed so well it picked up two awards from the

See **SUBTLE** page 6 *IYD*

(Top) A weekend retreat designed by Carver + Schicketanz of Carmel clings to a Big Sur hillside, offering stunning views as it barely disturbs its surroundings. (Below) Farther down the coast and equally suited to its environment is Treebones Resort, where guests are housed in yurts.



## Two Big Sur dreams come true

Yurts set green standard for getting away from it all

By **CHRIS COUNTS**

**R**OUND, WRAPPED in durable canvas and held together by geometric patterns of wooden framework, the yurts at Big Sur's Treebones Resort look more like overgrown mushrooms than the latest innovation in eco-tourism. For at least 1,000 years, nomadic herders have traversed the Mongolian steppes with their yurts in tow. Now, weekend vacationers are discovering — and embracing — the charms of one of the world's most affordable, efficient and lightweight dwellings.

John and Corrine Handy decided a yurt resort was just what Big Sur needed. Located just off Highway 1 about 65 miles south of Carmel, the 16-yurt resort opened

See **YURTS** page 12 *IYD*

## In Your Dreams

### SUBTLE

From page 4 IYD

American Institute of Architects Monterey Bay: a 2007 Honor Award and an Excellence in Sustainable Design Citation Award.

"I love that house," said San Francisco architect Lisa Gelfand, who was on the AIA award panel. "It's sort of burrowed into the hillside. And the sod roof forms this continuous space with the ground. But that earthiness is contrasted with

sophisticated use of glass, which is completely open to the view of the ocean."

Intended as a vacation home for Southern California residents Zachary Treadwell, Langka Dorberger and their children, the modest-size home sits on their 70 acre parcel.

"Our challenge," said Mary Ann Schicketanz, principal architect, "was to put a home there that had the least visual impact for the people driving by and the other neighbors looking down on it."

#### National attention

The effort turned out to be very successful. The multimillion

dollar house, which has been featured in the New York Times and Dwell magazine, is not visible from Highway 1. And the few neighbors above it see mostly native grass, which composes the roof.

Continues next page



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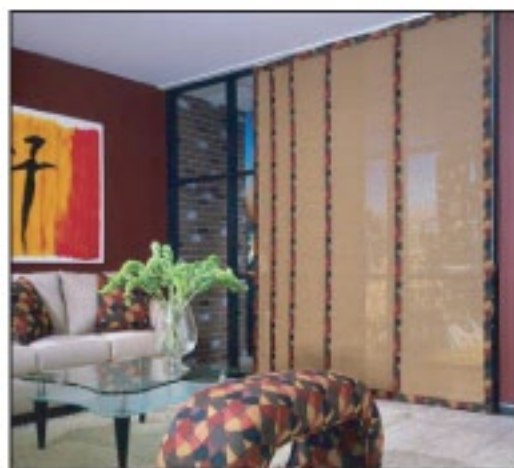
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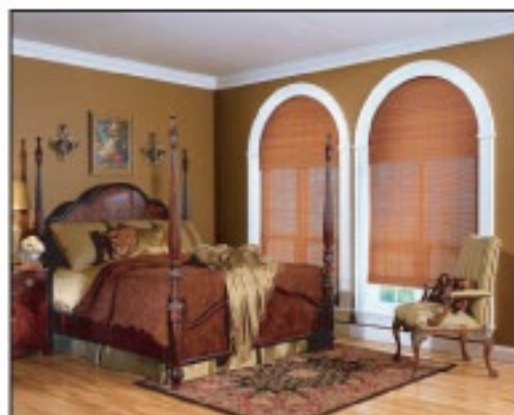
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"What we did is take the lower elevation and cut a shelf into the hillside," Schicketanz said. "On the uphill side you have a big retaining wall, and that creates your space."

**A living roof**

The curved grass roof, which provides insulation for the house, uses only four inches of soil and requires minimal maintenance and only occasional pruning.

"The hills sort of roll onto that roof," Schicketanz said.

The garage, laundry, pantry and utilities, including propane tanks, septic system and water tank are all hidden underground.

Schicketanz's business partner, Rob Carver, was of the original contributors to the draft Big Sur Land Use Plan — which created very strict design rules for new houses along the world-famous Big Sur Coast — and used a sod roof in the first house

*Continues next page*

**From above this house in Big Sur, neighbors don't see much because it was designed to be hidden from their view.**



PHOTO:ROBERT CANFIELD



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he designed in 1978. Carver + Schicketanz has become known for using environmentally conscious design.

Building anywhere on the California coast

requires overcoming a litany of local and state regulatory hurdles. But Schicketanz said there were relatively few challenges with the California Coastal Commission, notorious for its scrutiny of such coastal building projects.

"They like projects that are really dug into the hillside, are small and don't have a lot of

gratuitous architecture," she said.

Gelfand said one of the reasons the home was given the AIA awards was for the materials used, which she said were "sophisticated and appropriate."

AIA design Honor Awards are "given to projects of overall distinction, demonstrating

the architect's design abilities," while Citation Awards are given to projects "whose particular design characteristic are noteworthy, such as site placement, material technology and economy."

"It's a tiny house, which is a great thing," Gelfand said. "One of the ways to make a house sustainable is to make it small."

The house is constructed with materials strong enough to withstand the Big Sur Coast's hearty winter weather. Concrete, Douglas fir and cedar siding were among the materials used.

"It's a home that really responds

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**The Los Angeles owners of this Big Sur vacation house above Pfeiffer Beach can enjoy the patio while watching the sunset. The house was designed by Carver + Schicketanz in Carmel.**



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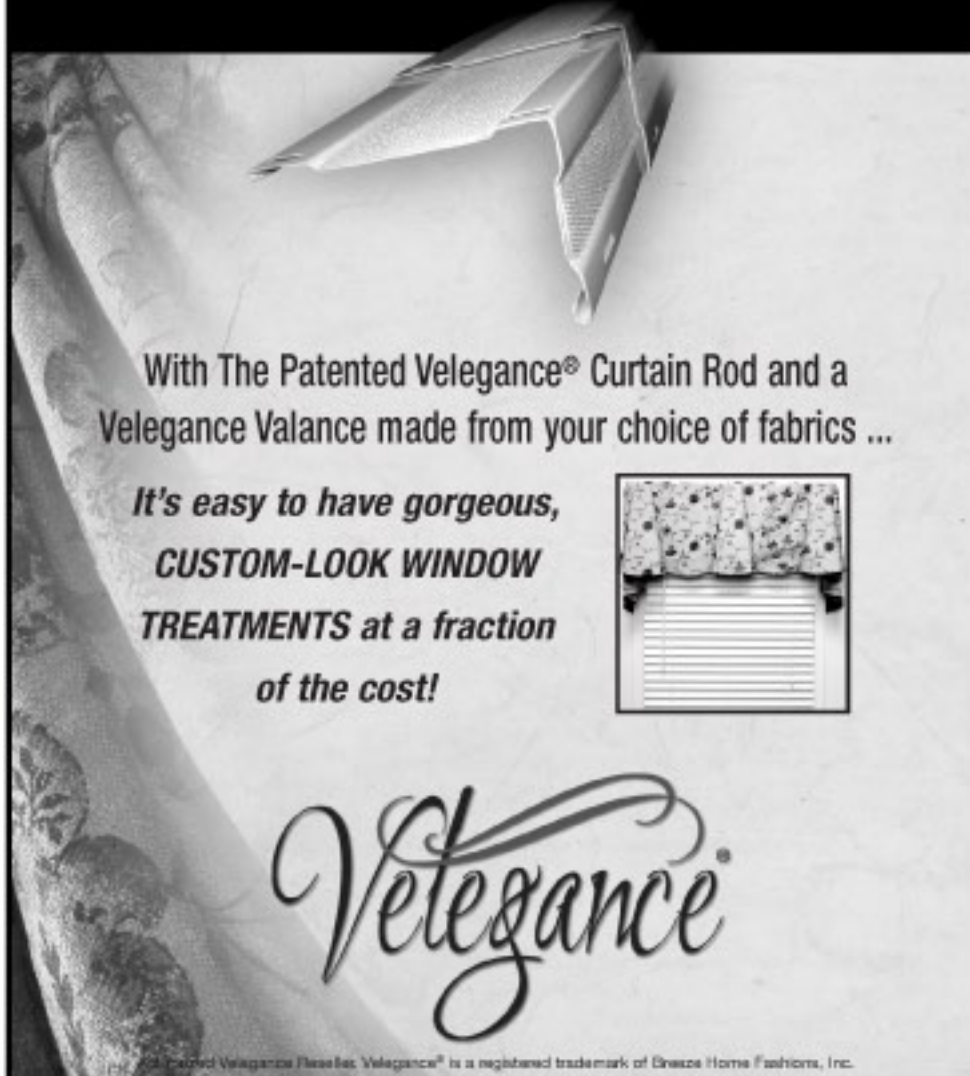
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well to the site but also to climate changes," Schicketanz said. "It is extremely windy down there, and we tried to use durable materials."

Reclaimed barn wood covers the fireplace, and limestone and concrete were used for all the counters. Brownstone was installed for decorative purposes.

**Grasslands restored**

The house's numerous and large east- and west-facing windows, which help heat the

home, can also be opened to cool it off.

Energy efficiency is created by a passive solar limestone floor that soaks up the sun's energy during the day and radiates heat at night.

"You can get away without having to heat or cool much at all if you build right," Schicketanz said.

For landscaping, Carver + Schicketanz didn't try to transform the environment with foreign vegetation, and instead went all native. Two acres of grassland were restored in place of invasive brush.

A curving stone wall along the east side of the house ensures privacy from the narrow access road, while a large stone patio allows for outdoor enjoyment.

"It's a small, practical little home," Schicketanz said. "It's not pompous. It's very simple and it blends in nicely and doesn't make a big to-do about itself."



**A glass entryway greets the owners of this Big Sur vacation home. Designed by Carver + Schicketanz Architects in Carmel.**

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