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Pacific NW

Jim Olson designs a home for art and those who treasure it

By Rebecca Teagarden

TO SIT IN the living room of this massive and open glass longhouse on the shore of Lake Washington in Bellevue is to never be alone.

Dale Chihuly and Guy Anderson and Preston Singletary and Gerard Tsutakawa and Julie Speidel and Ann Gardner and **Peter Millett** are here for company. The works of these Northwest artists are on shelves, coffee tables, the walls, the floor, outside, overhead. Everywhere.

And that's only the view over the edge of the teacup, refreshment offered in welcome.

"I just want to hang more art," says the homeowner, a woman who is fueled by the creative spirit. Of her home's design she says, "It's a simple concept."

And it is. Simple, though, isn't easy. Architect Jim Olson of Olson Kundig Architects, with interior designer Garret Cord Werner, lighting designer Brian Hood and landscape architect Charles Anderson, just make it look that way. Running down the length of the truly great room, which Olson calls the pavilion (3,060 square feet filled with possibility), is a 35-foot-long table, mahogany and nickel, ready to seat, oh, 40 for dinner. Beneath lowered ceilings on either end are two living-room areas: one as light as outdoors itself, surrounded by glass, next to a reflecting pool; the other darker, intimate, a fireplace, concrete walls, a bar. Outside spaces mimic the interior in function: living area with fireplace, kitchen, dining area, expansive lawn, long terrace.

"It is the most beautiful art," the homeowner says of work from our little corner of the country as she leads a home tour that proceeds artwork by artwork. Cris Bruch to Kenneth Callahan. Rob Snyder to Dennis Evans and Nancy Mee. Lino Tagliapietra. Catherine Eaton Skinner.

A mad passion for the arts, though, can be a slippery slope. Because what you see here is an entire house designed for art. Designed to display it: "I want every piece to have its own space." And to help the groups that support it: "We got involved with the arts organizations and McCaw Hall and the expansion of the Seattle Art Museum and PNB. And we lend our property for things like this."

Guests and even more art (William Morris, Paul Horiuchi) stay next door, the Mediterranean across the entry court. It had been the family's home for many years. She wanted to sell it when they got the place next door and decided to build. Her sentimental daughters wouldn't hear of it.

"We saw a construction company building a home in Meydenbauer Bay, Toth Construction," the homeowner says of their building process. "We thought they were doing an incredible job. We asked if they would build our house. They introduced us to a lot of architects, and we met Jim. We told him we just wanted one big room, and he was so excited. He drew it up, we tweaked it a little and that was it."

Not only did Olson design the home, he also helped his client find and commission magnificent pieces for it.

"He went with me to John Braseth's gallery, and we saw that Guy Anderson," she says, pointing out the large white painting in the truly great room. "He said, 'This is it.'"

"This is great fun for me," says the homeowner, who's found her niche with her own painting and collecting Northwest art. "Before when we traveled we just picked up things. Finally, I feel, wow, it's exciting to collect art."

And now there is a place for each piece.

Rebecca Teagarden writes about architecture and design for Pacific NW magazine. Benjamin Benschneider is a magazine staff photographer.

To see a video of this home go to [facebook.com/garretcordwerner](https://www.facebook.com/garretcordwerner). Look for Newport Shores residence.



"It's basically a pavilion where you have this very intimate relationship with the garden all around you," Olson says. In the entry courtyard is a **Peter Millett** sculpture, which Olson found at Greg Kucera Gallery.