



Wall Street Journal, February 10, 2012 "Where Art and Architecture Collide," by Nancy Keates
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Where Art and Architecture Collide

A sculptor and his architect wife team up to fix up their Venice, Calif., home

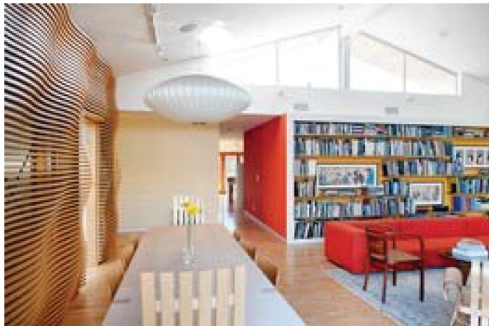
By NANCY KEATES

Venice, Calif.

Sculptor Cliff Garten is known for his grand public pieces. His wife, Molly Reid, is a residential architect. The couple's first collaboration: an overhaul of a dilapidated house and garage on the 11,000-square-foot lot they bought for \$800,000 in 2002.

The resulting compound reflects elements of each of them. Ms. Reid, 49, said she tends to think more about alignment and measurements. Mr. Garten, 59, said he understands a space by "feeling" its energy and finding a way to make a place and a sculpture fit together.

Photos: Where Art and Architecture Collide



Photographs by Michal Czerwonka for The Wall Street Journal

Sculptor Cliff Garten and his wife, architect Molly Reid, overhauled a dilapidated house and garage on the 11,000-square-foot lot they bought for \$800,000 in 2002.

Ms. Reid drew the plans, keeping the footprint of the 3,000-square-foot house but raising the ceilings to 9 feet in the kitchen and living room from 7 feet, installing skylights and opening up the living room to the yard with large glass walls that push open. The two-car garage that had been converted into a guesthouse was torn down and replaced by a 1,500-square-foot corrugated metal studio with 20-foot ceilings for the couple to work in.

Finished in 2009 for a cost of about \$500,000, the house and the studio are connected by a courtyard. The entire compound is concealed by a tall hedge, separating it from the hectic neighborhood of narrow streets and eclectic houses about a mile from the beach. A similar-size house with six bedrooms nearby is currently for sale for \$3.5 million.

Mr. Garten made sculptures to help make the house and yard relate to the studio. One way he did that was by incorporating a sculpture into the main house. He built a wall-like screen that divides the kitchen and living room yet maintains a sense of the room's large size. The sculpture, which cost about \$30,000 to make, consists of slices of finished plywood with a maple veneer, offset to create a look of undulating waves of wood. "It was generated by the energy and the volume of the room," he said.

The color palette in the main house came from a



Sculptor Cliff Garten is known for his grand public pieces. Now, in a collaboration with his architect wife, he's overhauled a dilapidated house in Venice, Calif., bought for \$800,000 in 2002. Nancy Keates has details on Lunch Break.

series of 19th-century Japanese prints Mr. Garten bought in Tokyo. Walls are painted bright colors: orange in the entryway, yellow in the living room and bright green cabinets in the kitchen. In the living room are three large prints by Mr. Garten—digital renderings of sections of his large sculptures that look a little like Spirograph drawings, in aqua, orange and yellow.

The couple picked most of the other furniture for its sculptural forms. There's a Noguchi coffee table and a collection of chairs with modern lines designed by architects, including Frank Gehry's

Power Play chair, which looks like it's made out of wood shavings. The modern Arne Jacobsen chairs around the kitchen table are pink, green, blue, orange, yellow and red.

Outside, Ms. Reid designed a galvanized steel-and-mahogany arbor covered with wisteria over a large outdoor dining table next to the studio, to give domesticity to the metal work space and connect it to the house. Also in front of the studio Mr. Garten made a sculpture with water bubbling out the top. Made from a big chunk of gray granite, it's the same color and height as the fire pit outside the house.

To soften the industrial feel of the studio, he made one exterior wall a garden wall, with plants like star jasmine crawling up its white stucco surface.

The living and working spaces the couple created reflect both their goals. Mr. Garten's reaction to moving to Los Angeles from Minneapolis in 2000 was to seek a respite from the vastness and craziness of the city—a space where he could live and work that was big enough to contain his massive works of art but tranquil enough to block out the city. He didn't want to have to fight L.A. traffic to get to work every day. So he made that refuge in the studio Ms. Reid designed, a large room with visible steel beams and concrete gray floors. At a 4-foot-long skylight, a 7-foot corrugated-plastic lighting sculpture made of small plates hangs from the 20-foot ceiling.

Around the room are models and drawings of many of the some 60 civic sculptures Mr. Garten has made and is working on, each of which take between three and six years to complete and include a 40-foot stainless-steel sculpture tower in Dallas and a 16-foot-tall curvy stainless-steel sculpture in Long Beach.

Ms. Reid wanted to stay in Venice, which is very urban. But she wanted a homey, warm environment to raise their now-8-year-old daughter. For her own personal space, Ms. Reid designed a large lacquered wood desk in an office filled with family photos. A door at one end leads out to a sunny garden with lemon, lime, mandarin and grapefruit trees and a little bench for reading. Inside she created a wall where 40 tubes of different colors of glitter are framed and hang perfectly spaced; her childhood dollhouse (a yellow Colonial) sits in the living room.

The house still isn't completely finished. Mr. Garten wants to make chandeliers (or "lighting sculptures") for the dining room and kitchen. "I envision them as curiosities—elegant but strange," he said.

Ms. Reid is fine with the puffy, white, inexpensive George Nelson bubble pendants there now. She said she wants to keep costs down and doesn't want to detract from the wall he made. "I'm the practical one," she said.

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