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A Little League mom succumbs to that most embarrassing of emotions: tempestuous rage. *By Pam Grimes*



Grab your grooviest shades and join the pack as Los Lobos howl at the Oregon Zoo July 18 (see p. 179).

ON THE SIDE To articulate the house's main areas, Matt Raphael sided the exterior of his home with cedar shingles, corrugated metal. South American cumaru hardwood, and stucco.



Against the Grain

A builder and furniture maker proves you don't need an architect's license to create a beautifully designed house.

A AMERICAN ARCHITECT Frank Lloyd Wright, a stickler for detail and a renowned egoist, sought control over every visible facet of the homes he designed—in one instance, he even specified the shape of the napkin rings that his client should use and the cut of the dress that she should wear when she hosted guests.

"I don't think I'd take it to that extent," says Matt Raphael, leading me through his newly completed house. But the 40-year-old designer, craftsman, home builder, and self-described Wright fan has marked just about every surface of his family's 2,950-square-foot home, which he designed and built from scratch, with his creative imprint. He made most of the clean-lined, Shaker- and Craftsman-influenced furnishings himself, and salvaged and lovingly restored the old fir

beams that now form the fireplace mantel and the roof's rafter tailings. He also planned the living areas of the Mount Tabor home so that floor-to-ceiling windows capture a 180-degree view of the rugged silhouettes of Powell Butte, Mount St. Helens, and Mount Hood.

Yet there's an important difference between Wright's and Raphael's integrative approaches to design. Whereas Wright was a capital-A architect who sought to impose his sense of order on the world around him, Raphael's creative impulses arise, he says, simply from his love of wood and woodworking.

Raphael shows me one of the first pieces of furniture he built: a tall, narrow cabinet that now stores the personal belongings of his children, Clay, 5, and Maya, 3. He made it in 1990, a year after graduating from the University of



VIEWING ROOM The Raphael residence is a study in conservation, from its passive solar design to the use of salvaged materials, such as the cedar beams that form the trellis on the back deck.



KITCHEN CANVAS Much of Raphael's furniture and cabinetry displays simple geometry and elegant recessed lines, as seen in the kitchen's island and its walnut bar stools.



OPEN HEARTH The tinted-plaster finish of a Rastra-block wall is repeated on the see-through fireplace that divides the main floor's living and dining areas.

Virginia with a bachelor's degree in architecture. At the time, his search for jobs with corporate architecture firms in the nearby Washington, D.C., area—and the arrogance of the architects he spoke with—already had begun to dissuade him from pursuing the profession. “I became disillusioned not with architecture,” he says, “but with architects.”

Raphael packed up his truck and toured the country in 1992, and 10 months later he settled in Portland, where his brother lived. He quickly fell

Raphael's creative impulses arise, he says, simply from his love of wood and woodworking.

in love with the city's stately Craftsman homes—and rediscovered his passion for residential design, working briefly for an architect, then for a home builder. In 1993, a friend asked Raphael to repair his front porch. One carpentry job led to another, and soon Raphael was running a small furniture-making and remodeling company, Raphael Design.

Among Raphael's clients was an old high school friend and his wife, who'd also relocated to Portland. Pleased with Raphael's remodel of their Laurelhurst house, the couple invited him to design and build their vacation residence in Hood River. It was an opportunity that

experienced architects his age rarely encountered, and Raphael grabbed it, completing the 3,000-square-foot home by the end of 2006. “To trust me, given that I hadn't built a house before, and let me take it to that level, was great,” he says.

That same year, it came time for his own family to put the same trust in him. He and his wife, Rachel, had purchased a double lot on Mount Tabor in 2002. After subdividing the property and renovating and selling the existing house, Raphael designed a home for the vacant corner lot. The couple's intention was to sell it immediately, but finding it easier to design the building with a particular client in mind, Raphael tailored it to the needs of his own growing brood. By the time construction finally commenced in 2006, he and his family had decided they wanted the home for themselves.

In part to maximize the home's resale value, Raphael gave it a fairly conventional outward appearance—gable roof, cedar-shingle siding, big garage. Still, as the framing went up, his neighbors worried over whether it would fit in with the surrounding stock, which ranges from old Colonial revivals to midcentury ranches. “Before the sloped roof went on, a neighbor asked, ‘Is this going to be architectural?’—as if that was a bad word,” Raphael recalls. “My employee

RESOURCEFUL LUXURY

Raphael bought the lighting fixtures in the dining and living rooms for \$20 apiece at Habitat for Humanity's ReStore shop; he built the dining room's walnut shelving unit and white oak table.



SPACE SAVER

In the master bedroom, the headboard also serves as one half of a walk-in closet.



said to him, "If you're asking whether it's going to be nice, the answer is yes."

The end of the house that faces away from the street toward the east is, actually, *quite* "architectural." For one, it's enveloped largely in glass, so as to endow the interior living space, especially the open-plan main floor, with natural light and a dramatic scenic backdrop. It also contains exterior wall segments made from an unusual material: Rastra block.

Sturdier than the stick-frame structure that supports the rest of the house, these stacked units of concrete and recycled Styrofoam keep the home's glass-heavy east face stable in case of high winds or earthquakes. Rather than camouflage the industrial-looking material, Raphael drew attention to it—coating the blocks with stucco on the home's exterior and tinted plaster on its interior to create a smooth, touchable surface.

Its hybrid support system isn't the only way in which the house, despite its traditional roofline, displays advanced architectural design. Raphael applied as many cutting-edge green building principles to the three-level, four-bedroom home as he and Rachel could afford. This is (subtly) visible as soon as you enter the modest foyer, where your gaze is immediately drawn through the dining and living areas toward the windows that look to the east; it's easy not to notice that the entire west side of the main

floor is windowless, which helps to keep the interior cool on hot days. Walk up the open stairwell adjacent to the foyer, and you've entered a giant ventilation shaft: On summer evenings, a powerful fan in the third-story attic sucks air from open basement windows to cool the rest of the house.

Come winter, warm-water-filled radiator pipes embedded in the floors provide an energy-efficient heat source controlled by three separately adjustable thermostats—one for the main floor; one for the second floor, which contains three bedrooms and two baths; and one for the basement, which houses a guest room and a play area for the kids. Moreover, throughout the home various construction materials and hardware, from wood floors to lighting fixtures, were salvaged from warehouses and construction and demolition sites around town. Uniting all of these elements is Raphael's handcrafted furniture, including tables, chairs, cabinets—even bar stools, whose shallow, indented seats match those of the long benches that flank the dining table.

Appraising the result from the front sidewalk, Raphael describes the house, humbly, as "a big piece of furniture." And it is that: a finely crafted showcase of wood and glass that displays both the beauty of natural materials and the functional payoffs of intelligent design. But if you prefer, you can call it architecture. ❖



MORNING DELIGHT A dramatic sliding door shields the travertine-tiled master bath from shower spray.