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BEHAVIOR PATTERN

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ARCHITECT NILS FINNE HAS WORKED ON LANDMARK PROJECTS—LIKE THE GETTY CENTER ARTS COMPLEX IN LOS ANGELES—BUT, SINCE MOVING TO SEATTLE IN 1994, HIS NAME HAS BEEN MADE PRIMARILY WITH PRIVATE RESIDENCES. The Harvard-trained architect's latest is a marriage of mid-20th-century Northwest modernism with 21st-century style, textures and sensibility. "It's a quintessential Northwest contemporary house," says Finne, AIA, design principal of Finne Architects, who collaborated with project manager Brad Gassman on the renovation of one couple's Lake Forest Park home. "It's this idea of taking modernism and making it much more intensely personal and textural and creating surfaces that invite human touch."

Although the home is a short drive from downtown Seattle, it sits on a 3.5-acre wooded site that feels secluded. "You get this sense that you're really in the deep woods," says Ian McMillan, superintendent of Seattle's Schultz Miller, builder for the project. "You don't think you're that close to a city."

The house was originally built in the 1950s and had distinctive terrazzo floors and an open-beam configuration. "The owners wanted to retain the essence of the house," adds Paul Vassallo, co-owner of Schultz Miller along with Terry Miller. "There were a couple sacred elements: the terrazzo floors and the open configuration in the main room." The

ARCHITECTURE Nils Finne, AIA, and Brad Gassman, Finne Architects		
INTERIOR DESIGN Nils Finne, Finne Architects		
HOME BUILDER Paul Vassallo, Schultz Miller, Inc.		
BEDROOMS 2	BATHROOMS 2	SQUARE FEET 2,612

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act of preserving during the renovation lent an inherent sustainable quality to the project, and the use of energy-efficient radiant heating beneath the terrazzo floors and green materials (such as resin panels, low VOC paint and sustainable wood products) furthers the lasting effect.

Finne gave the owners a floor plan that better utilized the existing square footage in order to focus their resources on high-quality finishes, which were a priority. "They wanted a high level of craftsmanship and care placed on the interior. They knew if they did a more ambitious project in scope, we wouldn't be able to have that same level," he says. "A lot of times, it can be easy to get too ambitious in the beginning, and you can't execute at the quality level you'd like. They kept their eyes on the ball."

HANG TIME
In the newly expanded kitchen, pendants by Bruck Lighting Systems suspend over architect Nils Finne's custom-designed steel hanging bar, with a raised cast-glass countertop by Glassworks and metal support brackets. Ann Sacks tiles form a backsplash amidst Miele, Gaggenau and Perlick appliances.

IN THE DETAILS

The entry door provides one of many custom-designed patterns, with strips of Douglas fir embedded in etched glass. "It gives you a preamble of the craftsmanship you see in the house," Finne says. Hans Wegner's Wing chairs sit in the foreground in the living room.

SKY HIGH
The hemlock and Douglas fir ceiling was preserved, but the roof was altered to allow vertical-pane skylights, optimal for distributing soft, diffused natural light. A Ligne Roset sofa sinks into an area rug from Driscoll Robbins in the living room.

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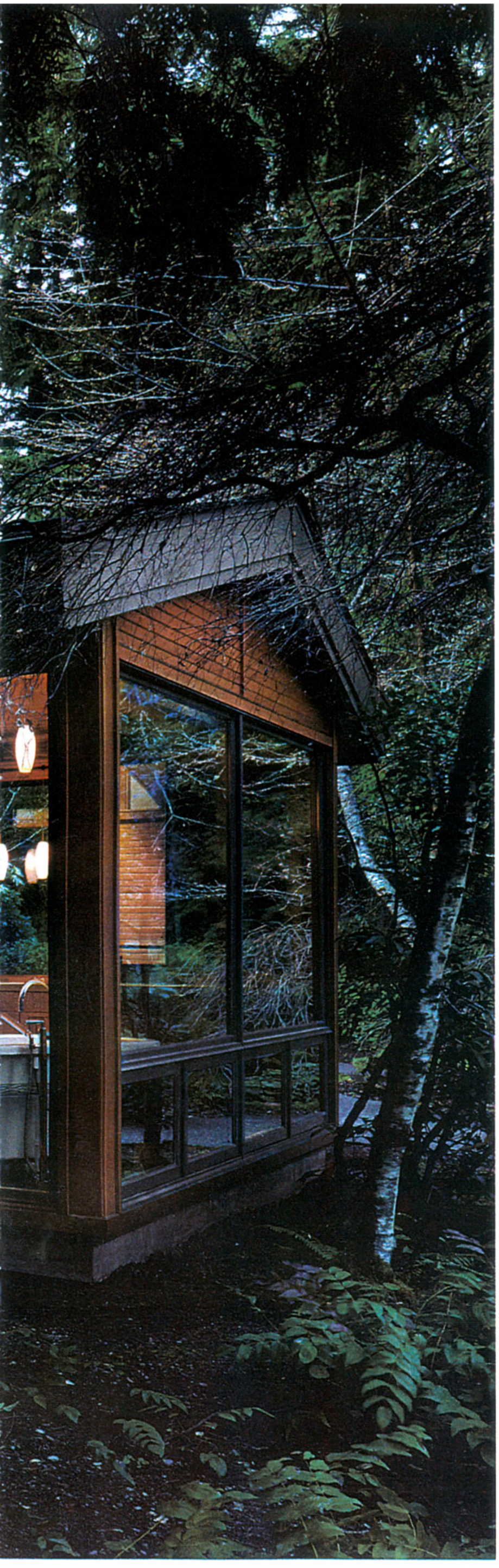
A powder room was removed near the front entry to allow glass walls and more natural light. A new spacious, light-filled master bedroom and master bath were also created, each with floor-to-ceiling glass views out to the forest. The main living and dining spaces were slightly enlarged, and the roof was rebuilt to include monitor-style vertical-pane skylights to bring in light without glare.

Finne has a unique gift for pattern making on surfaces. The front door, for example, is made from an interlocking series of thin Douglas fir strips embedded in etched glass. Finne also custom-designed the dining room table lights, a set of three blown-glass fixtures he calls Troms that have since been licensed for use in other projects. The new kitchen has counters clad in quartz and cast glass, with continuous windows extending directly to the counter level.

LOOKING GLASS
The living room enjoys floor-to-ceiling glass views onto the surrounding forested property. Wood trim where the glass meets the wall is continuous from inside to out, emphasizing the openness to nature.

INTO THE WOODS

The floor plan was reorganized to create a more spacious, light-filled master bedroom and bath, each with an enveloping view through the glass to forest views outside. The wooded site also allows for proper privacy given the transparency of so much of the façade.



DAY LIGHT
"I couldn't have predicted the serendipity of how sunlight creates these incredible shadows," Finne says of the views that permeate the home, such as the one in the master bath. The Zuma tub's stand, custom-designed by Finne, was made from wood and waterjet-cut steel.

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The terrazzo floors notwithstanding, the house is largely festooned in wood, from hemlock ceilings to the main room's cherry-paneled cupboards, which were milled to create a pattern resembling woven strands of wood. They are suspended from a 30-foot-long accent wall adjacent to the dining and kitchen areas, clad in weathered steel panels, indicating this is not simply a restoration of a mid-century modern home but a 21st-century house, too.

CUSTOM FIT
The kitchen and dining area is bordered by a weathered-steel-paneled wall with custom cherry cabinetry featuring a weave-like pattern that Finne designed. Chairs by John Thoe pull up to a custom table made from steel, bronze and reclaimed elm in the dining area.

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The new master bedroom and bath are separated by a glass wall decorated with a custom pattern based on a design Finne created with pen strokes on paper. The pattern has a greater density at the bottom than at the top in order to balance privacy with distribution of natural light from the skylight above. It's indicative of the personal artistry that went into the house, from Finne's vision to the execution by his collaborating builders and craftspeople; but the final result is also a testament to the clients' involvement. "We had so many engaging discussions about materials and light," Finne says of the homeowners. "Particularly in a project like this, I really believe on a fundamental level that projects become the work of the client through the architect."

FUN HOUSE
The bathroom vanity has an entire window wall behind it, with mirrors suspended from the ceiling. The effect creates an interplay of transparent and reflective surfaces. The cabinet door pattern was custom-designed by the architect.

PATTERN PLAY
The glass wall between the master bedroom and master bath uses an etched pattern to bring a touch of privacy. "I'm constantly setting up layers of textures and patterns," Finne says. New Cementics veneer flooring by Artisan Finishes grounds the room in industrial warmth.