

Nestled in the hills overlooking the Pacific, the Moggridge house settles neatly into the surrounding landscape, providing a restful retreat for its busy occupants. Bill and Karin's bedroom window lets the couple take in the view from bed.

# Just **South** of the City

After years of living the intercontinental life, Bill and Karin Moggridge finally found their home in the middle of the woods, just an hour from downtown San Francisco.





**Project:** Moggridge Residence  
**Architect:** Baum Thornley Architects  
**Location:** Woodside, California



The house is divided into two main areas (living/dining and working), which are connected by a central corridor (right). The shelving system, designed by Baum Thornley and manufactured locally by Kanda Alahan of Rivendell Woodcraft, provides ample display space for Bill and Karin's collection of design objects from around the world. "We didn't want too much closet space," Karin explains, "because that would encourage us to collect more stuff."

Heading south from San Francisco on Interstate 280, the "little boxes made of ticky-tacky" (made famous by singer/songwriter Malvina Reynolds in the '60s) that line the hillsides of Daly City and South San Francisco rapidly give way to rolling green hills that turn a smoldering gold in the summer. Twenty minutes down the road, you can take any number of exits and creep farther away from civilization. As you turn onto Skyline Boulevard and drive through towering redwoods, the city and surrounding suburbs become a memory.

Here, deep in the woods, about an hour from downtown San Francisco, Bill and Karin Moggridge found the land that would become their home. "When Karin found this place, she did a little dance," says Bill, a cofounder of Ideo, the international design consulting firm. "From that moment, I knew it was all over." "It was just so incredible to see it," continues Karin, a fiber artist and clothing designer from Copenhagen. "I'm not a religious or spiritual person in any way, but it was as if something had said, 'This is it. This is where you should put down your roots.'"

High above the Silicon Valley smog and sloping toward the distant Pacific, the land captivated the Moggridges from day one. Eccentric neighbors (including a helicopter flying, horseback-riding, earth-moving-equipment-obsessed emergency-room doctor and a Cadillac-driving Neil Young), attracted by the area's seclusion and beauty, are hidden at a safe distance among the manzanitas.

After Ideo took off in the '80s, the Moggridges found themselves living the intercontinental life, splitting their time between London, where they owned a flat, and Palo Alto, where they owned a small house. "But everything had to be sacrificed for this," Bill says of their new house.

The Moggridges had long thought about building their own house but hadn't seriously considered the possibility until 1994. "Basically, our freedom started with the kids leaving home and Ozzy passing on," Bill says, referring to their two grown sons and now-deceased dog, named after the infamous Black Sabbath singer Ozzy Osbourne.

With their freedom granted, the couple quickly staked their claim. Just 70 days after Karin first saw the land, the Moggridges were the proud owners of 17 acres of trees, dirt, wildflowers, and their fair share of poison oak, spiders, and mice. The two creative forces quickly got to work on their dreams, setting up a tent in a clearing and spending as much time as possible imagining what could be. "The first thing we did was to try and understand the land," Bill says. "So we got maps and an aerial photograph from the USGS. Then we started exploring the land, surveying the edges to find out where the periphery was, putting little flags every hundred feet."

"We were hoping to design the house," Karin says. "We made this little book in order to find out what we liked. The book got some of the desire to actually design it ourselves out of the way." "It also allowed us to work out our









## Dwellings

In the living room (below), a coffee table designed by Hans Wegner, Greg couches by Zanotta, and dining room chairs by Arne Jacobsen.

Opposite, clockwise from top left: The Moggridges have kept their bedroom simple, decking it out with just a television, Eames rocking chair, exercise machine, dresser, and bed.

Karin designs all of the clothes for her clothing line, KarinM, in her studio just off the living room. Bill designed the pulley system to store the couple's bikes. The tables are restaurant kitchen tables from Economy Restaurant Fixtures in San Francisco.

Bill designed the desk, also manufactured by Rivendell Woodcraft, that wraps around the hallway. The Maui chairs are from Kartell and the filing cabinets are by Steelcase.

The view from Karin's studio.

differences and discover what we each wanted," says Bill.

With the idea of designing the house on the back burner, the Moggridges made a short list of five architects whom they were interested in working with, including the small San Francisco firm of Baum Thornley. "We knew Doug [Thornley]," Bill explains, "from having worked with him on Ideo's San Francisco office."

The Moggridges sent their 62-page book—containing chapters titled "The Land," "What We Want," "First Ideas," "Where We've Lived," and "Planning"—to the five firms and waited to see how each responded. "Most of the well known ones sent us a copy of the book that they had published. They didn't try particularly hard, but Doug and Bob [Baum] came to us with a portfolio and then finally presented us with the biggest proof of their interest in doing the job," Bill explains.

Thornley and Baum had been so moved by the site at their initial meeting that they snuck back to it without the Moggridges' knowledge. They scoured the land, collecting dirt, tree bark, flowers, shedded snakeskin, and leaves, putting them in test tubes and constructing a wooden box to safely hold them all—a crafty presentation of the hues and textures that the architects saw playing a crucial role in Bill and Karin's home.

"It was the first ground-up residential project for the firm," Thornley says, "so we really wanted to do it. Having worked with Ideo, we knew this house had the

potential to be special. We looked at their book and thought, Wow, they're ready to go. They really thought it through, and it wasn't just a matter of how many square feet they wanted in the bathroom. It was a whole other level of how they lived, and how they wanted to be."

At the final meeting, the architects placed their creation in the center of the table and told the Moggridges they couldn't open it till the end of the presentation. When they finally did, the deal was done. "It proved that they understood what we liked about the place—because we really felt that the house needed to have everything to do with the natural qualities of the place, the foliage, the earth, the trees," Bill explains.

Baum Thornley was awarded the commission and began work almost immediately. The first issue was to figure out where to place the house on the 17-acre site.

"It's a lot of land," Thornley explains, "but a lot of it is not buildable." The architects walked and studied the large plot for weeks to get a good feel for the land before coming up with six sites to present to their clients.

"It was a logging area," Baum says, "so there were skid trails left by trees that had been cut and dragged out. You'd move through wooded areas and suddenly have clearings with huge vistas. There were moments of walking through a path of trees, with filtered light, and then you'd come to a bluff with [bright] sun. It was framed views versus the horizon. You can see that in the circulation of the house: It's like you're moving through the forest."

In the end, the site for the house was determined by the Moggridges' reluctance to give up one of the nicest spots on the land—a clearing where the couple had been camping and where all the design meetings had taken place. "We'd sit at that spot for every meeting, fully thinking that was where the house would be, and I'd just think to myself, This is great," Thornley says. "But then I had to say to Bill and Karin, 'Do you really want to give this up? This is your only outdoor space. Is this really where you want the house?'"

In the end, the house was situated about 100 feet east of the clearing, and now the living room gazes out to the wild grass encircled by manzanitas, pines, and redwoods. With the site finally set, the architects began the design process, which proved to be more complex than they had imagined. "Working in urban and suburban areas is just so different," Thornley explains. "There are so many planning and zoning controls in the city. Out here, on a rural site, there is no containment—you can make it however big and however high. Of course, there are some limits, but you can build an 8,000-square-foot house out here. There are virtually no controls."


There were also no neighboring houses, or streets for that matter, to base the design on. The only thing guiding the process was the natural environment—and "a hint of Eichler," Thornley says. Trolling the forest, searching for color cues, material choices, and organizational hints, Baum and Thornley were able to create what they like to call "a house belonging to the landscape" and, in the process, a home for two people looking to put down roots. ■











"We had always wanted to move up here. When the real-estate agent showed me this place, I just knew this was the place. It was instant."

## Before the House, There Were Trailers

On their annual week-long bike ride from Palo Alto to Lake Tahoe, Bill and Karin Moggridge would stop to admire the dilapidated farmhouses that line the side of the road. "We'd stare at these sad-sap farmhouses and notice many of them had glistening, gorgeous trailers in their yards," Karin says. "That's what sparked our interest."

The Moggridges began scouring the classifieds, and within a week came across not one but two trailers. "We found this guy who was selling a 1949 Vagabond and a 1951 Spartanette manufactured by the Hughes Aircraft company," Karin explains. "We couldn't resist—we bought them both."

Researching the restoration of vintage trailers, the couple quickly found Craig Dorsey of Vintage Vacations. Dorsey, one of the country's premier restorers of vintage trailers, politely declined the Moggridges' restoration request due to time constraints, but he couldn't resist their Vagabond. He offered to trade the couple an already restored 429 Southland Run-About, manufactured by the Mathison Aircraft Company, for their precious Vagabond. "It broke my heart [to trade the Vagabond], but the Run-About isn't half bad," Karin says.

Now the Run-About (not half bad indeed) has taken its place in the Moggridges' favorite clearing in their yard. "It's where our guests stay," Karin says. And the Spartanette? "We're trying to find someone else to restore it," Bill says. Whenever that happens, the Moggridges' guests are sure to be pleased: "It's complete with a bathroom and shower and everything," he adds. —A.W.

"We found our awnings in the Coolaroo catalog from Australia for only about \$75 apiece," Bill says. The awnings (pictured here) are strung up with wires and S hooks bought at Home Depot.



Bill and his son Erik enjoy another beautiful day in the woods. Erik usually stays in the Run-About trailer (pictured) when he comes down from San Francisco to visit his parents.

