

Silicon Valley

MODERN LUXURY

THE VALLEY'S OWN

**ANNE
WOJCICKI**

ON FAMILY, THE FEDS & HER
FIGHT TO CHANGE LIVES



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WE GO!**

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NEW HOTELS
IN THE UNITED
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**PLUS
THE COOLEST
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**THE
HOME
DESIGN
ISSUE**

FEATURING

A MODERNIST GEM IN ATHERTON
RUSTIC & REFINED ECO-LIVING
IN PORTOLA VALLEY
STUNNING VERTICAL GARDENS

A NATURAL FIT

AT HOME, ONE ECO-FRIENDLY VENTURE
CAPITALIST AND HIS FAMILY ARE DRAWN
TO A DEEPER SHADE OF GREEN.

By Zahid Sardar // Photography by Blake Marvin, HKS





OPEN SPACES Tah Mah Lah, by architect Robert Glazier, sits on 2.7 acres in Portola Valley. In the central building, a living room with rollaway glass walls is anchored by a 12-foot-long red sofa by interior design firm BAMO.

Tah Mah Lah, an unusual mellifluous moniker for an equally unexpected house in Portola Valley, is the Native American Ohlone word for mountain lion. The property belongs to Paul Holland, who funds digital energy startups and causes such as the World Wildlife Fund, and wife Linda Yates, an educator and investment consultant; both are committed to the region's decadeslong mission to protect the area's flora and fauna.

To that end, their 5,600-square-foot house, designed by California architect Robert Glazier when he was still with the firm HKS Hill Glazier, pointedly steers clear of toxic plastics. It is a net-zero, fully solar-powered wonder made of locally sourced, unpainted, sturdy natural materials. Its award-winning interior architecture and sensible furnishings by Michael Booth and his team at BAMO (bamo.com) in San Francisco, are equally well-crafted, functional and long-lasting. "All of this costs a great deal more up front," explains Holland, "but a big part of environmental sustainability is durability."

What's also remarkable is that Glazier's design, inspired in part by architect William Wurster's iconic 1926 Gregory farmhouse near Santa Cruz, isn't monolithic or ungainly, as many so-called green buildings tend to be. It is instead a charmingly eccentric cluster—not unlike Hill Glazier's lanai-style Four Seasons Resort in Hawaii or a recent enclave for Andre Agassi in Idaho—of five loosely connected, metal-roofed barn-like buildings perched high on the 2.7-acre sloping lot. They contain distinct spaces for the owners, their three young daughters and innumerable guests, as well as a garage for three electric vehicles.

The structures, especially the kitchen wing and the "Ladies Lounge" for the girls that have photovoltaic panels on their roofs, are carefully arranged in an X plan for optimum day lighting, solar gain and passive heat. And the central H-shaped living area has large glass walls facing the down-sloping garden and swimming pool on the east side and hills on the west. They pocket away easily to open the room to the outdoors on warm days. "It is as close to being a tent as it could possibly be," Glazier says.

The lofty, single-story buildings are all made of exposed crisscrossing Douglas fir truss beams, hardy recycled oak wood floors, western cedar cladding, hand-troweled plaster finishes and lots of glass. Recycled limestone—none of it was newly quarried—was used by stonemason George Gonzalez to craft a circular skylit shower, chimneys,



RUSTIC & REFINED Clockwise from top: The master bath features a stone-lined shower; in the central kitchen—with Douglas fir ceiling trusses, western red cedar walls and reclaimed oak wood floors—an eating island surrounded by hand-forged scrap metal stools welcomes family and guests; a solar-heated pool in a meadow within the sloped property is where the old Yates' home used to be.



walkways and stairs, mostly to specifications from BAMO. Fabric colors and decorative objects are also subdued and naturalistic to complement the views.

“Linda really wanted a nice barn, so we aimed to keep the details simple, and there is nothing harder than that,” says Booth. “It is a difficult house to furnish as it is because there are almost no walls to put things against.” So, except for a nearly 12-foot custom sofa where everybody gathers, they shopped in London and New York for old furniture that could stand on its own, like a room within a room. Some new pieces came from designer Axel Vervoordt in Antwerp, where they are reliably made of sustainably harvested wood, wool and cotton, and it all adds a global sensibility.

However, “you can see and feel the native

environment,” Holland says. Set amid hardy indigenous plantings fed by recycled wastewater and rainwater from a catchment cistern, the home seems to spring naturally from its site and attracts not only deer, coyotes, bobcats, raccoons and dusky-footed woodrats who are regularly spotted on hidden cameras, but also prompts addled chickens that are raised alongside an organic potager on the property, to “wander straight into the open living room,” Booth recalls with a chuckle.

In many ways this labor of love is an experiment—and a model for anyone who wants to learn more about green-building. The homeowners’ mission began somewhat serendipitously nearly a decade ago right after they had spent a couple of happy

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yet rain-filled years in Amsterdam with the children and chose to return to this sunny neighborhood where Yates had been raised as a child, a stone's throw from her future alma mater, Stanford. Although Yates' and Holland's mutual interests had taken them all over the world, this relatively verdant corner of Silicon Valley remained alluring in part because of its conserved woodlands, but also because her parents still lived there in the same sprawling yet convivial ranch-style house they owned since 1967. For Holland, who grew up in urban Baltimore and had come to believe in and invest in healthy green-building technologies, settling in such an environment was both compelling and instructive.

Yates' parents readily sold them their outdated house—it was eventually replaced by the new swimming pool, and the old building's materials were repurposed or recycled—so that as future custodians of the land, the young couple could build something greener and more enduringly beautiful. Holland and Yates had long admired Glazier's home for their friend Mark Box and Glazier's Four Seasons Resort Hualalai, and they wanted something like that.

"We were always interested in the environment, but we were not thinking green initially," says Holland. "We did a conventional design before we learned about LEED, and then we were at a TED conference and met architect William McDonough. He spoke so eloquently about the notion of environmentally regenerative architecture and of buildings that created more energy than they used; it was an epiphany." It sharpened their resolve to be the greenest of them all, exceeding LEED and other eco-building markers. McDonough introduced them to Ann Edminster, an expert in that field, and "she became our green goddess who exposed us to a network of like-minded specialists," Holland adds.

He and Yates have filled Tah Mah Lah with not only up-to-the-minute energy-saving green technologies, but also commonsense heating and cooling solutions that "make the building look so natural in the west," Holland observes. "It will age like a beach house and still be around, we hope, for my children's grandchildren." ■



SERENITY NOW Clockwise from top left: The "Ladies Lounge" and kitchen buildings form a courtyard; a bedroom looks out onto drought-resistant landscaping that is fed with grey water; the living room's limestone fireplace is by George Gonzalez.