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NEWS

[Blending art with life: \(/news/sections/news/215-news-briefs/9382-J8753\)](/news/sections/news/215-news-briefs/9382-J8753)

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Photo by Monique Schoenfeld, Town Crier

Carol and Dr. Dexter Hake in Los Altos Hills

Creating and enjoying art is an everyday pleasure at Carol and Dexter Hake's Los Altos Hills home. It's an art studio, art gallery and family nest, with paintings, carvings and sculpture, indoors and outdoors - not only Carol's art, but also works by many other California artists.

"We say the house had plenty of room for five people, but not enough now for two," Carol said recently, during a tour of her unique environment, shaped over 35 years of residence.

The ambiance is modern, spare and chic. For example, the furnishings in the central "living room," now Carol's studio, include just an easel, a drafting table, a piano, two chairs and an airplane-like view of San Francisco Bay and Mt. Diablo.

"After the kids left, the living room became my studio. We sent the furniture off to college and never really missed it," Carol said. "When we have a party, we offer people a glass of wine in the studio because I want to show them what I'm working on, and then guests serve themselves food right from the stove and we sit in the dining room."

This pared-down, "just the comfortable basics," approach to home décor extends to the Hakes' recently-remodeled master bedroom suite, designed by architect Mark Sandoval of Mark Sandoval Architects of Los Altos and built by contractor Rick Loretz of Mountain View.

"Mark came into the old bedroom, took one look around and knew exactly what to do," Dexter said. "He flipped the positions of the closet and bathroom, so the new bathroom would have a view, and pushed up the ceiling to give a much airier, spacious feel."

Because of a large new walk-in closet and dressing area with fitted shelves and dressers, the bedroom itself has just a bed, two custom-made bedside tables built by a craftsman in Bolinas, two beautiful, adjustable, wall-mounted reading lights of brushed steel, a wooden chair - and many paintings. The walls and ceiling are white, there are no curtains at the windows, but there is color everywhere - from Carol's landscape and still-life

paintings on the walls and the hillside views in two directions.

"We're really thrilled with this; our only regret is that we didn't do it many years earlier." Dexter said, as he gave a tour of the adjoining master bath with its twin corner windows for enjoyment of the panoramic bay view and the huge corner shower of granite and glass blocks.

The luxury of simplicity extends throughout the home, which conveys a sense that every object has been carefully chosen and is there for a purpose, practical, historic or artistic. Venerable family antiques mix with classic modern furniture. Colorful Turkish rugs brought home from a trip cover wood or terra cotta tile floors. In the family room, built just a year after the Hakes moved in, Carol's early wood sculptures mix comfortably with a newly-purchased glass and metal coffee table designed by Noguchi.

About 20 years ago, a family friend, architect Carol Dienger offered to do something about what Carol Hake called "the world's worst kitchen." She had been feeding her family from a very cramped and uncomfortably cut-up space and was ready for a change. Dienger designed a classically-appointed, open kitchen - open to the adjoining dining room to facilitate buffet service to guests, and open shelves for china, pans, spices and baskets. Blue tile counters, terra cotta tile floors and blond oak cabinets please Carol's aesthetics and look completely up-to-date, two decades later.

Along the central bedroom hallway, which opens to all of the bedrooms, the Hakes inserted long, narrow windows to replace the high horizontal ones original to the house. This opened the view, increased the light and created a gallery effect for displays - currently, Carol's monochromes.

"We rotate Carol's work through here," Dexter said.

A built-in bookcase holds her working notebooks, most created during trips the couple has taken abroad, which she sews together herself.

"I use the canvas from paintings I'm not pleased with for the notebook covers," Carol said. Each notebook is a treasure-trove of sketches, reminders of the people and places they've enjoyed and the family times together. They take each grandchild, in the early teen years, on a trip to Europe, a custom which Carol's mother originated and which she feels is very important for the children's development.

Outdoors, the Hakes, members of the California Native Plant Society, have chosen to take a minimalist approach to landscaping, planting fruit trees and a vegetable garden, but mostly sticking to hardy natives around the house and patio.

On the outside wall near the front entry, Carol hung an oil painting of an oak grove landscape some 15 years ago, which deeply upset the Federal Express deliveryman because he was afraid it would be ruined by the elements. However, the painting has faded only a little over the years, and Carol considers the damage well worth the fun they have had while viewing it in its "native" habitat.

On the other side of the house, facing the bay view, a series of patios extends from the dining room, creating outdoor sitting and entertaining areas close to the kitchen. Here a new fountain reigns supreme, a sunken square of dark water surrounded by Arizona flagstone and backdropped by a four-foot-high fieldstone wall. In the center of the fountain pond, a stone platform displays Peninsula artist Shirley Lutes' statue of mother and child, carved of green stone.

"I've wanted water in my garden forever," Carol said.

Sculptures made of bronze, wood and other metals, each carefully positioned in relation to their surroundings, create a garden as rich with art as the Hakes' interior spaces. Yet the couple is just as interested in their beloved old metal wine crusher, stemmer and corker, sitting among the redwoods, as they are in the formal art. At one time, they and their friends made wine together and cellared it in an old converted bomb shelter on the property.

"We have just over an acre here, but it looks like much more. We are so lucky because almost none of our neighbors want fences and our properties flow together. We coordinate our plantings and the kids just go back and forth to each other's houses," Dexter said.

Carol plans to add the new fountain to her repertoire of backgrounds for her still life paintings. In fact, she frequently uses her French bistro-style patio table and other domestic objects in her work, so that walking around the house and garden creates a *déjà vu* experience for those who have seen her paintings in galleries.

A member of the Gallery 9 art cooperative on Main Street in Los Altos for 27 years, Carol Hake is a familiar name to local art collectors. Her landscape paintings of California hills, oak woodlands and rural farmlands and her colorful still life renderings of domestic scenes have earned her many awards. Her gallery affiliations have included the Los Robles Galleries in Palo Alto, the Creative Concepts in Art gallery in New York City and the Bolinas Museum Living Artists Project. Last year she traveled to the small town of Albi in southern France as a participant in the Palo Alto Neighbors Abroad project and lived and worked with a French artist. In return, the French artist and two colleagues stayed with the Hakes last month for 10 days, absorbing the contrasts of Silicon Valley and the Peninsula countryside.



But Carol has an entirely different life, as well, which also reflects her love of nature: she leads two backpacking trips each year under the auspices of the Sierra Club. For 10 years in mid-June, she has led a group of hikers into an area north of the Arctic Refuge Area in Alaska, where caribou, grizzly bears and wolves abound, and where spring and summer are compressed into just six weeks.

"Everything has to happen in that short time and it's just incredible," Carol said. "When we get there, it's still winter and six weeks later the seeds must fall from the plants and the season is over."

Her other Sierra Club assignment is a yearly "Women's Beginning Backpacking" expedition in the Sierras.

"Women come from all over the country. They're so frightened at first and by the end, they are relaxed," Carol said. She plans the food, gets everything organized and leads the group about five miles per day through the wilderness. This year, the August trip accommodates just 15 women and last week there were already 30 or 40 people on the waiting list.

Carol ascribes her love for the outdoors to a magical experience she had during World War II, the summer after she was in the ninth grade.

"My grandmother and I lived in her cabin in South Dakota, with no electricity or telephone. We were totally isolated and took long walks every day together and I just loved it," she said.

Dexter met Carol at the University of Iowa where he was a medical student and she was an art student who gave an evening slide presentation about her previous summer in Europe. Dexter attended the lecture and then asked a friend to arrange a date - the rest is history.

"It was a blind date for her, but not for me," Dexter laughed.

After his residency in internal medicine at Stanford, the couple needed a larger home for their family of three children, and found the four-bedroom ranch house high above Los Altos Hills City Hall.

"In those days, there were still wonderful orchards and the houses were much smaller," Dexter said.

Dexter Hake retired from his Mountain View practice of internal medicine eight years ago, but continues his active participation in local environmental and philanthropic groups. He is a physician with RotoClinic, a free, walk-in health service in Mountain View sponsored by local Rotary Clubs and El Camino Hospital. He served on the Los Altos Hills Environmental Design Committee and is a docent for the Stanford University Jasper Ridge Research Program, where he leads tours for students and visitors. In addition, he's an active tennis competitor at the Fremont Hills Country Club in Senior, Super-Senior and Open Age tournaments.

The Fremont Hills Club in Los Altos Hills just closed an exhibit of Carol's paintings and the family recently celebrated her 70th birthday there.

"This is the millennium year of big zeros for us," Carol said. "My 70th, the start of our 50th year of marriage, the year our oldest grandson turns 20 and our two youngest granddaughters turn 10."

This year, the Alaska backpacking hike is on hold because of her birthday festivities, but the rest of the year's traveling and art and environmental activities continue as usual. Clearly, the Hakes are among those lucky people who have figured out what they like to do - and then do it.

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