Magic Mural
House blends into natural landscape

Also inside:
• Overwintering peppers
• The power of art
• Geoff Hamilton roses

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A Los Altos resident has his brother paint a mural of California landscapes on his home’s facade.
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Adding artwork to your home has the power to transform the space and add emotional significance.
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Cover photo: Caroline Horn and Jeremy Minshull pose in front of their Los Altos home, on which Jeremy’s brother Jonathan Minshull painted a large mural.

Photo by Megan V. Winslow/Town Crier

The neighbors call it a magic house. And, in a way, it is. A recently painted mural on the facade of this Los Altos home makes it virtually disappear.

Trees painted in the section surrounding the garage door create the illusion of being part of the front yard.

When homeowners Caroline Horn and Jeremy Minshull remodeled last year, they eliminated the front porch and “pushed out the house.” The new exterior was the perfect “canvas” for a mural, created by Jeremy’s brother Jonathan – an English artist and muralist.

They call the mural a manifestation of their love of nature. The pair are biologists. He is CEO of ATUM in Newark and she is a lab manager and molecular biologist at Stanford University.

Jonathan Minshull – Jeremy’s brother – took his cue from the couple’s lifestyle when asked to paint the mural.

When he arrived, Caroline and Jeremy took him on hikes around the area. Then he blocked out the mural and sketched. Once he had his basic plan, he began painting. He used house paint rather than his customary oils, so the colors will withstand the elements.

“It took him about five weeks,” Jeremy said of Jonathan’s handiwork. “He would take a break, sit and look at it for a while and then continue.”

The mural extends the width of the front of the house. Starting from the right, as you face the house, a river flows through a woodland to the sea, on the left. The woodland is populated with critters the family loves such as a raccoon standing close to the front door – perhaps to welcome visitors. If you look closely, you will see a mockingbird (one sings around midnight every night), a house finch by the doorbell (a nest is nearby) and the family’s cats.

A tree in the mural has roots that appear to be octopus tentacles and, indeed, the tree itself is an octopus.

As the river moves toward the sea, there are flying manta rays on the horizon.

“In nature, they appear to be flying, and it would...
Continued from Page 5

be hard to depict them in the ocean,” Jeremy said.

One enters the house between woodland and seascape. The front door is an aluminum art piece by Gregory Clark, which the couple bought at the Kings Mountain Art Fair in Woodside. Clark enjoys working with aluminum and carves intricate designs.

Although it was meant to be hung on a wall, its measurements matched a standard front door, so that’s what it is. Clark also created the burnished aluminum backsplash for their remodeled kitchen. They had planned to use ceramic tiles and had driven to Santa Cruz to get them. But the “door” changed their minds.

Instead, the family used the tiles to create four wall mosaics for their lanai.

MEGAN V. WINSLOW/TOWN CRIER

Part of the mural Jonathan Minshull painted shows a detailed seascape, with cliffs overlooking the wide open ocean.

Pre-mural, a colorful garage door painted by Jeremy and the kids (Alexander, now 17, and Rachel, now 13)
defined the facade of the house. At the bottom of the garage door is a row of dinosaurs. At the corner of the mural, Jonathan painted a couple of dinosaurs that lead the way into the woodland landscape.

**Nature and family**

Caroline and Jeremy bought their ranch-style home because of “the good schools, parklike backyard and 12-foot wall in the living room,” she said.

The wall was the perfect place to hang an Aboriginal acrylic painting, “Rainbow Serpent Dreaming,” one of the many treasures they have collected on their travels.

Each journeyed to California decades ago. He came to study as a post-doctoral researcher at UC San Francisco and she came to do her master’s at UC Berkeley. They met at a biotech company and eventually married.

Jeremy Minshull’s brother, Jonathan Minshull, above, painted an elaborate mural on the facade of Jeremy and Caroline Horn’s Los Altos home.

“We’re both transplants from foreign countries. Jeremy’s from England and I’m from Alabama,” Horn said.

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“We came here for a short term 30 years ago.”

“We fell in love with the diversity of people and the beauty of the natural landscapes,” Jeremy said. “It wasn’t long before the views flying into SFO triggered feelings of homecoming.”

The home that welcomes them today is a riot of color. And it all started with a chair.

“I gave Jeremy an unfinished chair and he painted it in a kaleidoscope of colors he loved,” Caroline said.

One chair led to six, and then to bookcases and to the multicolored beams sheltering the lanai.

Flamboyant Viscosity glass flowers, reminiscent of renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly, bloom in the backyard – perhaps attracting bees to the garden’s two hives.

The pièce de résistance of the remodel is the Continued on Page 10

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glass-fronted room divider between the living area and hallway. Jeremy calls it a “cabinet of curiosities” – all of which reveal their passions.

In addition to family photographs and art highlights from their children’s days at Almond School, there are animal bones (squirrels, rats, even a possum and a deer), “because anatomy is amazing”; gourds they grew, dried and painted; papier mâché dragons from Oaxaca, Mexico; a plaster octopus (“very intelligent creatures but so different from us”); a mug full of porcupine quills (“beautiful natural engineering”); seashells; wood pockmarked with holes drilled by sea creatures; and Venetian glass.

The eclectic collection speaks to the couple’s love of nature and family – all of which can be found in the mural. 🌿

Artist Gregory Clark created a burnished aluminum backsplash for the remodeled kitchen in Jeremy Minshull and Caroline Horn’s Los Altos home.
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Home & Garden | August 28, 2019 | Page 11
Curious neighbors wondered why I was potting up all the pepper plants in my garden last November. For the past several years, I’ve overwintered at least one of my most robust or interesting pepper plants. Last year I decided to experiment on a larger scale. Like tomatoes and eggplants, peppers are tropical perennials that can live year-round in warmer climates. Unlike tomatoes and eggplants, peppers can be worth overwintering in Northern California. Tomatoes grow like weeds once the weather warms

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up, and they are much healthier grown from seed or even from a cutting kept in a warm window. But peppers grow more slowly and can survive dormancy – an overwintered plant can outperform the same variety grown from seed.

The following questions can help you decide whether it’s worth overwintering a particular pepper plant.

• Is the plant healthy?
• Did you like the peppers enough to grow it again?
• Is it a rare or hard-to-find variety?
• If you grew it from seed, did it grow slowly?
• Did it take longer than other varieties to produce mature peppers?
• Do you have a place to keep the dormant plants?

Many hot peppers are notoriously slow growers, so they are particularly good candidates for overwintering.

Productive plants
Hot-pepper aficionados have told me that overwintered plants can start fruiting as much as a month earlier, compared with plants grown from seed, which means they are productive for a longer season. Overwintered plants with well-developed root systems also produce

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more peppers at a time.

Both of these factors contribute to double (or more) yields.

Here’s how to do it:

1. Carefully dig up your plants at the end of the season, before the first frost. Keep some soil around the root ball. Put them in containers and add potting mix (not garden soil) around the root ball. Add mulch on top. Remove any immature peppers so that the plants can go dormant. I’ve pruned my plants only if I needed to make them more compact to fit my space. Be sure to prune above a bud to avoid leaving stubs that can invite disease.

2. Keep the plants in a cool location, out of the rain. I’ve kept my plants inside a fenced carport or under the eaves. If a freeze is forecast, be sure to add extra protection. The plants need some light until the leaves have dropped, and then a cool, dark location such as a garage is acceptable.

3. Water the plants every three to four weeks. Let them dry out between waterings, but don’t let them dry out fully. Make a note on your calendar so that you don’t forget about them.

4. Approximately six weeks before the last frost date (or six weeks before you would set out your pepper transplants), start preparing your overwintered plants to return to the garden. Give them more light and maybe a little fertilizer. Once you start seeing new growth, also give them more water.

When I’ve overwintered only a few well-coddled plants, I’ve had close to 100% success.

This year, I treated my plants with benign neglect, sometimes forgot to water them, and didn’t follow my own advice to prepare them for the garden. Still, seven out of 24 sweet pepper plants and six out of 13 hot pepper plants survived.

Tanya Kucak gardens organically. Email her at tanya.garden@gmail.com.
Storytelling with art

Pieces can pack an emotional punch

By Design

By Celeste Randolph

“Everyone discusses my art and pretends to understand – as if it were necessary to understand – when it is simply necessary to love.”

– Claude Monet

In interior design, art is often treated as an afterthought. Long after the paint has dried and all of the furniture has been arranged, we start thinking about the art.

But art does matter. It is so much more than simple

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decoration. To me, art has emotional power. It personalizes a home. Often, a piece of art is a great place to start when decorating a room.

I met my dear friend Lei Tung several years ago when he was a client. Lei works in high-tech but loves art, philosophy and travel and writes an art blog.

Lei has taught me so much about the many forms of art and framing over the years. Every time I walk into his home, I lose myself in the stories he shares about the artwork he has acquired.

On my last visit, one piece stood out. The piece was the figure of a man with his mouth agape and his hands up in the air, showing possibly either elation or the expectation of arrest – and the enigmatic words “Prison Free” above it. I asked Lei for the backstory.

He met an artist in downtown Chicago who had approximately a dozen paintings leaning against the railing of a subway entrance. One of the paintings, titled “Prison Free,” compelled Lei to stop and talk with him.

None of the paintings showed the polish of a trained artist, and there was no clear subject or style connecting them.

However, as the two talked about growing up in a tough neighborhood and how to work toward a better
life when you have few role models to illuminate the path, Lei came to see how the man’s paintings were the expression of ideas, influences and inspirations he had collected over time.

“To me, it is the real-life story and quest of the artist – even the little amount that can be gleaned in 20 minutes of a heartfelt conversation on a busy street in downtown Chicago – that gives this piece purpose,” Lei said.

When clients of my interior design business are looking for pieces to place on their walls, we pull from their personal photos and objects, an amalgamation of their travels, their lives.

We have found beautiful photos to enlarge and frame in a series that clients might have passed over. We have framed a napkin or menu from a restaurant with special meaning, a key to a lock left on a Paris bridge during a couple’s first romantic trip, and coins given as a gift to a doctor for his exceptional care.

These treasured objects summon memories or feelings, and tell such a beautiful story in their homes. Art doesn’t have to be expensive or even classically beautiful, it just has to speak to you. Surround yourself with pieces that tell a story.

Celeste Randolph is an interior designer based in Los Altos. For more information, visit celesterandolphdesigns.com.
Romantic bouquet

Appreciating the beauty of the Geoff Hamilton rose

COMING UP ROSES

By Michelle Isaac

Roses come in various colors. I love pink roses. Lucky for me, there are many pink roses to choose from, including dozens of pink rose plants in the United States, in a wide variety of shades.

The Geoff Hamilton rose is among my favorite pink roses. It is particularly interesting because of its balance of pros and cons.

It is without doubt beautiful; however, it is susceptible to problem conditions in the Bay Area environment, which can make it a challenge for most people to grow.

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In fact, I was hesitating to write about this rose, but felt I should at least share how lovely it is. After reading this column, you can decide if you want to take the challenge.

Renowned breeder David Austin introduced the first Geoff Hamilton rose in 1997, named in memory of his old friend, a famous British gardener, broadcaster and author, best known as the presenter of BBC Television’s “Gardeners’ World” in the 1980s and ’90s.

The flower has 110 pink petals that are deeply cupped and delicate in appearance. It’s 3 1/2 inches in diameter, perfect for any rose bouquet, creating a romantic and feminine ambience around the home. It is especially pretty in a vase, when a few of the soft pink petals fade to white and fall on the table.

The Geoff Hamilton rose is (eventually) a strong-growing, repeat-blooming, medium-tall shrub rose, spanning a 4-foot-by-3-foot area. It is best known for having nicely formed petals, shaped in layers upon layers. The flowers are warm and cup-shaped.

This old-fashioned globular bloom forms with a nice, light scent. It makes a lovely cut flower, but it doesn’t shatter so quickly. The Geoff Hamilton looks a lot like one of David Austin’s florist roses, so you can
The Geoff Hamilton rose’s pink petals fade to white as they fall on the table.

Indeed, Geoff Hamilton is a beautiful rose; however, some rose growers suggest it is difficult to take care of. Black spots may be a problem, and the plant is not shade-tolerant. The pink flowers easily rust and mold once wet from the rain.

For the rose to look its best, I recommend planting it in full sun. Every spring, the rose emerges very healthy and has its first flush in May. After the big show, the flower rests amid some black spots on its leaves. In July, you will see its wholesome new branches emerge from otherwise less appealing ones.

It is well worth the wait. The medium-green leaves are nice and glossy; it looks as if each cane takes its turn blooming. I cut the unhealthy leaves out, so in August the cute pink flowers bloom again in clusters.

Although there are many pink roses out there, and more disease-resistant ones, the Geoff Hamilton rose’s unique beauty definitely wins in my heart.

Michelle Isaac is a gardener in Los Altos. For more information, email isaactheflorist@gmail.com. Julia Isaac contributed to this column.
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