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**NORTHWEST
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NOW & THEN

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Thoroughly **MODERN** MODEST

A distinct style emerges from the salvaged and the sustainable

CAN ENVIRONMENTALLY sound modernism make a successful move to the South Park neighborhood near the Duwamish River? Sure, why not?



The roof drainpipe empties into a rectangular reflecting pool. It's part of the water-catchment system, which stores runoff in a 1,200-gallon underground cistern. The system is an example of sustainable building practices that the couple incorporated into their home, and that are increasingly inspiring architects.

committed to choices that made environmental sense, even if they cost a little more in dollars or effort. To that end, the couple included a water-catchment system and a green roof, and used structural insulated panels, or SIPs as they are commonly known, as the building technique, instead of wood framing. These are all ideas that have started to become more popular in the past 10 years, and Woodward and Belau wanted to incorporate them not as a special thing but as a matter of course.

Generally, SIPs provide ultra-efficient energy insulation and sound-proofing. They're made of foam insulation sandwiched between two skins, usually oriented-strand board (OSB). The large panels are custom made at a factory and assembled at the site like a puzzle.

With relaxed grace, this flat-roofed home slips right in among the mix of eclectic people, small houses and light industry. Geoff Belau and Lauren Woodward, both architects, wanted to create a home that had clean, modern spaces and measured use of strong colors, and that explored and embodied certain design and environmental themes. They were inspired by the Case Study Houses designed by Los Angeles architects after World War II. Those houses featured modest size and modern design, and used the latest in cost-effective materials and techniques. The idea was to create prototypes that would redefine the American home.

"We wanted small, moderate, flexible," says Woodward, 38, who works at Johnston Architects. "Light and openness were important," adds Belau, 37, who recently set up his own architecture practice. "And it had to be affordable."

While insistent on affordability, Belau and Woodward were



The living roof has about 4 inches of lightweight soil. Trial and error have led the couple to concentrate on sedums and creeping thyme. The living roof reduces heat reflection, and slows and filters storm-water runoff.



The two-story living room is the entry hub leading to the private areas as well as the kitchen. Lauren Woodward and Geoff Belau bought the teak tabletop from David Smith & Co., and designed a base with casters for easy cleaning and rearranging of the room.

You enter the house directly into the double-height living room. On one tall wall are bookshelves, a television and gas fireplace. Another has an expansive 10-foot-wide sliding-glass door that opens onto the courtyard, opening up the room and allowing it to serve many purposes.

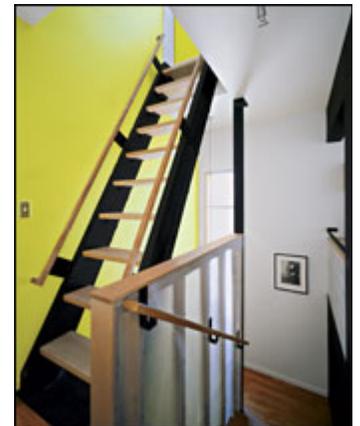
The interior is finished with salvaged madrona and other hardwoods, lending an elegant Northwest feel to the modern idiom. Several of the walls are painted chartreuse. The bright yellow-green makes a seductive contrast to the concrete floors and woodwork. "We wanted the house to glow from within at night," Woodward says.

Overall, the house is L-shaped, and no width is greater than 16 feet, so there's easy access to the outside and natural light. Even the closets have windows. The three-bedroom, two-bath house is legibly arranged with the private spaces on the long axis, and the more public spaces on the short axis facing the street. A loft overlooks the living room, with a low bookshelf serving as a half-height wall. The carefully modulated mix of open and closed spaces makes the house feel generous and responsive, and hence very livable.

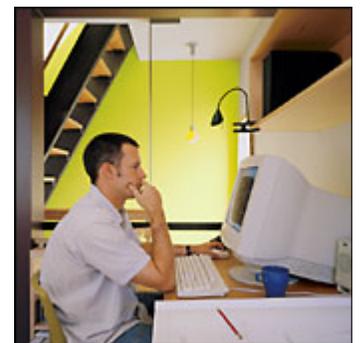
The Woodward-Belau house came together with typical speed, in only 2½ days. "I don't understand why it isn't used more," Woodward says in praise of SIPs' efficiency, strength and use of recycled wood material. The cost was about the same as traditional frame construction, according to Belau, who worked with Premier Building Systems in Fife.

The couple bought the lot four years ago, and it came with a small, shack-like house, which proved the perfect place to hole up while they cogitated about such things as SIPs and the house design. Now that the 1,700-square-foot house is finished, they have what amounts to a small compound, the open space between the new and old structures forming a kind of courtyard.

Modern homes sometimes seem like they're trying too hard, but this one gets right to the point of practical living.



The stair to the roof deck is made of steel and wood, with a sturdy commercial feel. It was created by a friend as part of a trade.



Geoff Belau uses the loft room for his computer work. He recently set up his own architecture practice.



The built-in bookshelf holds architectural books, the media center and objects d'art. The green color was inspired in part by a willow tree outside the window.

environmental sense and gave the new construction the feel of having a history. Woodward and Belau bought a dozen worn school slate chalkboards at Second Use and stored them for two years before they built or even knew how the boards would be used. As it turns out, the slate was cut into various shapes and deployed throughout the house, as a floor in the entry, and as countertops in the bathroom and kitchen.

The couple also used common commercial materials in unusual ways. For example, reinforced glass was cut and fitted as kitchen backsplashes. Leftover metal roofing was fashioned into a yard fence. A translucent material generally used for greenhouses found its way not just to an outside awning but inside as well.



The exterior is finished with Hardipanel, placed vertically on one volume and horizontally on the other. The house numbers are neon that glow red-orange at night.

While green building doesn't necessarily directly contribute to livability, it does help move society in a sustainable direction, kind of like driving a hybrid car. To that purpose, the couple topped part of the flat roof with 6 inches of soil, and are growing sage, moss and sedums. This kind of living roof helps slow and filter storm-water runoff and reduces heat reflection, Woodward explains. The water-catchment system they installed will eventually help irrigate the yard. Water from the roof drops to a shallow reflecting pool, then overflows to a 1,200-gallon underground storage tank.

Finding recycled materials also made



The upper cabinet doors, of frosted Plexiglas, slide open, and the countertops are fashioned from old slate chalkboards purchased at Second Use. Using recycled and less familiar materials was an important goal for the architect couple.

By being resourceful and savvy, they put together a moderately sized home that is well realized and integrated with sustainable building approaches — still keeping overall costs under \$150 per square foot.

And while they insist they were not trying to build a dream house, no doubt the roots of some dream house are here.

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