

# Two Lafayette Homes on AIA Tours

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*Bringing the outside trellis indoors creates a built-in ledge to display some of the owner's art collection.*

*Photos courtesy of LDA Architects*

The original road leading to the house was long and winding and approached the site from the south exposure. When a newer road was built into the area, a dogtrot entry facilitated flipping the front door to the north side.

Windows are unexpectedly built into room corners in the new wings, leaving the walls free to display artwork from the 1700s to 1900s, much of it part of a collection of architectural models from the European Grand Tour tradition. An additional several thousand 20th century souvenir models are housed in a museum space, a separate building with a soaring ceiling and a spiral staircase off to one side.

The landscape has been re-designed, leading those indoors outside, and inviting inside much of the surrounding oak trees and private hillsides. It doesn't feel like a 5,000 square foot home (some of which is off-tour), but it certainly invites you to take in the Cal-

ifornia hillside on which it is built.

The second Lafayette home is a bit of a Cinderella story – a free standing unit on a hillside intended to become an in-law/rental in a neighborhood of single family homes.

When its owners saw it for the glass slipper that it was, they moved in themselves. At only 750 square feet, the home still manages to be “neat, tidy and elegant,” said architect Thomas Lee.

It is the smallest whole house project Lee has ever designed, and one of his very few residential projects. “Just because you downsize, you don't have to lower your standards,” he said.

The original home design was submitted by a different architect and imagined as a tall and vertical structure climbing the hillside. It failed – twice – to pass the city's design review board.

Enter Tom Lee. The clients accepted his first design of a single level rectangle with recessed entry, with a bedroom and common room (kitchen/living space).

Wisteria vines cover the entry arch, providing

shade and color in summer.

The eastern walls are floor-to-ceiling glass, and the lines blur between the inside and out, with features like a river rock “streambed” running the inside length of the common room. A trellis brought inside became a ledge for displaying the owner's artwork.

The west side of the building is nestled into the earth, acting as insulation and minimizing view disruption for neighbors uphill. “We built a house that's responsive to the environment,” said Lee.

He likes his work to present the owners with “little surprises,” noting that the entry arch frames the best hillside view, and the front door opens onto a sky lighted niche, allowing yet another spot to feature artwork. The single bath shares that same skylight; the 11-foot-tall ceiling increases the feeling of abundant space.

East Bay AIA Home Tour 2013 runs from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 10.

To purchase tickets (\$40 in advance; \$50 day-of) visit <http://tinyurl.com/jvqzd6v> and click on “register now.”



*The bedroom gets morning sun through its west and south-facing windows, and shade from the protruding wisteria vines.*