

Published September 25th, 2013

Over the Rainbow Artist's mid-century home boasts bright walls and colorful art collections

By Cathy Dausman



Artist Freddy Moran's husband, Neil, stands in his home office, complete with bright red walls, a peach ceiling, yellow and red overstuffed chairs, one of Moran's original quilts on the wall and a to-die-for view. Photo Cathy Dausman

over in purple.

The couple made a conscious decision to forego curtains and drapes, both of which are superfluous for a private hilltop lot. Moran said the original brown hallway "felt like a movie theater" and "was so dark, you almost needed a flashlight to navigate." Its lavender walls now showcase another quilt plus a loving collection of family pictures. The guest room is painted a vibrant shade of turquoise which even splashes color across its open-beamed ceiling. It's a perfect place for the art quilter to showcase her handiwork.

One quilt bedecks the guest room four-poster bed; others are displayed on the walls; more quilts drape the seating area. In addition to bold colors, there is a collection of whimsical artwork, some made, others chosen by Moran. The 3-foot-tall handmade cloth dolls that sit along the sidelines were designed by Moran, and brightly decorated Majolica plates, a mix of new and collector's pieces, form wall decorations in several rooms. An animal still life area rug near the entryway fig tree is almost too pretty to walk on.

Her husband Neil admits he was "assigned" the room which became his home office, complete with bright red walls, a peach ceiling, yellow and red overstuffed chairs, a Freddy Moran original quilt on the wall and a to-die-for view.

And although he may not appreciate the subtleties between red, orange and coral colors, (he is, ironically, red-green colorblind) he emphatically likes this space.

Moran transformed the carport into her quilting workshop, adding windows and removing closet doors to show off a plentiful fabric inventory. A second closet full of black and white fabric manages to "pop the artwork color, and balance the light" on her signature quilts and brings high contrast to yet another space.

Lively green tile and area rugs brighten the living room floor. A McKensie Childs fence decorates the fireplace opening. A set of ceramic fabric squares top the living room's glass coffee table, now covered with collectibles and art.

Soon after the house was redone, Moran said a parcel delivery worker peeked inside in awe. "Is this a house?" he asked. "Can I bring my wife [to see it]?"

Moran said yes.

Clearly, the woman who calls bright red a neutral color knows what she's doing.

It was a decision as clear as black and white - before she ever set foot inside, artist Freddy Moran knew she would buy the house. The 900-square-foot Eichler-style home was perched on a hilltop in Orinda, with backyard views encompassing Sleepy Hollow and Orinda Downs.

"On a clear day you can see Mt. Tamalpais," she said. But the house was entirely brown, down to its tile flooring. That was 17 years ago, and that was the last time the adjective "drab" would apply. Today it is a carousel of floor-to-ceiling color that would make a peacock blush.

Moran and her husband, Neil, bought the home after raising five boys in nearby Lafayette. "I felt this would be a happy place to live," she said. It's hard not to feel happy - and more than a bit slack-jawed - entering the artist's home.

The couple reconfigured rooms and added windows, carving out a total of 3,100 square feet of living space while largely staying true to the original footprint. They enclosed the home's courtyard entryway with glass skylights, raised the sunken floor and painted the walls deep purple. A 50-year-old fiddle fern fig planted inside now reaches for the second story ceiling. Riser-less stairs with checkerboard trim and dotted with stars point the way to the master bedroom, which Moran said "feels like a tree house."

It was the first room to be repainted, and it was done



A 50-year-old fiddle fern fig reaches to the second story ceiling. Photos Cathy Dausman



One of Moran's colorful 3-foot-tall cloth dolls.



Freddy Moran shows a sampling of colorful quilts stacked neatly in shelves.

Reach the reporter at: cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA