

Art of living

Mexican town inspires architect and artist husband

MARTY HOPE
CALGARY HERALD

Three-week-old Isabella sleeps in her crib, oblivious to the fact her parents are playing tour guide to visitors anxious to see and hear all about the 6,000-square-foot home she'll some day be running around in.

The walk-out bungalow sits on a 0.2 hectares of sloping land in the upscale country residential neighbourhood of The Slopes. Located on the west side of the city, it has unobstructed views of mountains and farmland from almost every room in the home.

Unique in its design, finishes and furnishing, the home of Calgary artist Paul Van Ginkel and his wife Kristin was also a challenge to create from an engineering perspective, given the property's severe slope.

"The challenge was building on the slope, and that's likely why the property was still available when we asked about it," says Kristin, an architect cum stay-at-home mom, from the sun-drenched balcony.

Sixty piles were driven 18 to 24 feet into the hillside in order to provide a



An ornate door knocker on the front door of the house.

solid foundation for the home "The engineering required was just phenomenal," she says.

A plate in the dining room hutch pretty much sums up the theme for the 125-foot-long home. Casa Van Ginkel is a tribute to the Spanish way of life that both the artist and his wife love.

The wall colours, furnishings and accessories throughout the home harken back to Mexico — more specifically, the historic town of San Miguel de Allende.

It is also a studio and gallery used to display Paul's works-in-progress and completed pieces.

"Being an architect, Kristin designed the house in two hours on a Sunday afternoon," says Paul.

SEE ART, PAGE 12



Photos, Brett Beadle, Calgary Herald

Kristin and Paul Van Ginkel in their kitchen of their home, which Kristin designed.



The house has a balcony with mountain views. Paul Van Ginkel's two-storey art studio is on the left.

FROM II

ART: Mexican items for house

"It was amazing to watch it take shape."

Construction took 13 months.

After purchasing the land in December 2003, Paul and Kristin packed their bags and headed for San Miguel on a shopping spree — and to get married.

A month later they returned, carting with them their marriage certificate and a 54-foot container loaded to the gunwales with Mexican artifacts to furnish their home.

"Let's see, we brought back 45 light fixtures, four sets of nine-foot double doors — some of which are 400 years old — a four-by-10 dining room table that sits 14, a 10-foot wrought iron spiral staircase, oxen yokes that have been used as door headers, cabinets for the great room, and lots of smaller accessories," says Paul.

But not all elements of the home are from Mexico.

The massive 10-foot-high wooden front door was manufactured in Calgary.

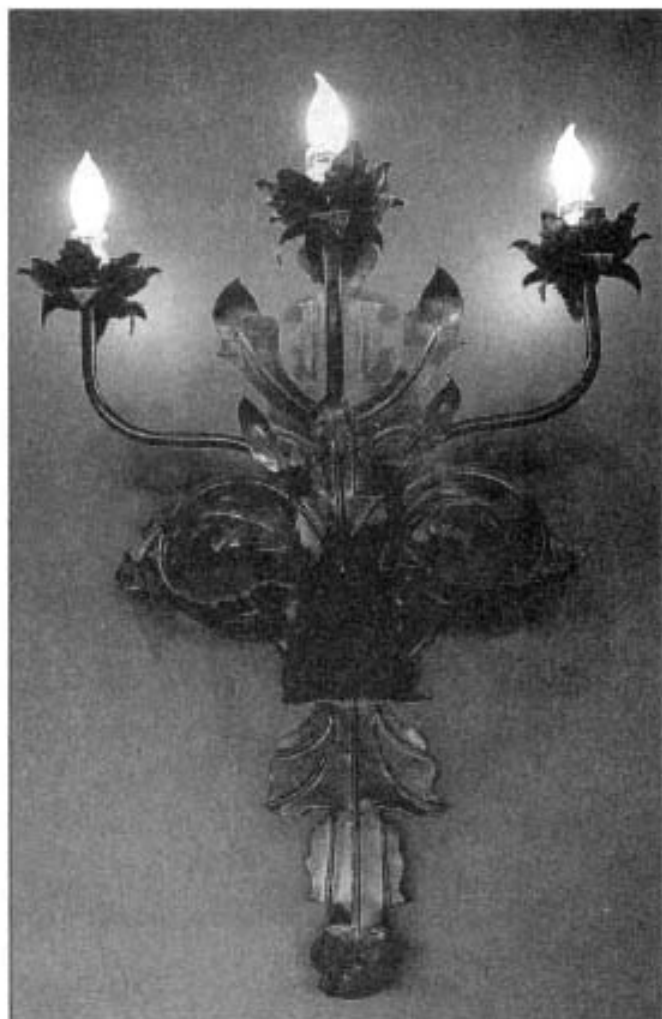
Two thousand square feet of five-inch barn-board planking on the floors through the main living area comes from barns in B.C., while the door casings are fir.

The knotty alder cabinets were custom-designed by Calgary builder Laratta Homes.

As the front door opens, a view can be seen of the mountains through the great room.

The central area of the home is one big room, comprised of kitchen, dining room and great room.

The focal point of the great room is a large fireplace with an Alberta ironstone face.



Brett Beadle, Calgary Herald

A decorative lighting fixture in the house.

The hearth and mantel consist of petrified wood Kristin uncovered while rooting around wood piles in Mexico.

The great room is dominated by a huge dining table with a Mexican chandelier.

Beyond, an eating bar delineates the kitchen with its alder cabinets and a door leading to an exterior spiral staircase to the lower covered patio outside the rec room.

SEE BEAMS, PAGE I3



Brett Beadle, Calgary Herald
The fireplace in the great room is faced with ironstone. The mantel is petrified wood.

FROM I2

BEAMS: Hand-painted bowls

The bathrooms each have under-vanity lighting, while one has a modern-day ball-and-claw bath tub.

They also show off Mexican hand-painted bowls that have been transformed into vessel sinks.

At the end of this wing of the home, behind a pair of mesquite doors, is the master bedroom. It has a vaulted ceiling and a door to a west-facing balcony.

A double-sided fireplace ties the bedroom and ensuite together. On the ensuite side, the fireplace is at the foot of the jetted tub.

Travertine tile is used on the floor as well as around the tub and shower and the vanity has twin vessel sinks. There is a separate makeup desk.

Off the master bedroom is a large dressing room that Kristin describes as a "very useable closet."

Moving back along what she describes as the "spine" of the home, a series of decorative beams have been set into the hallway ceiling.

Another pair of well-weathered, ill-fitting mesquite doors opens to the upper floor of Paul's two-storey studio. A spiral staircase leads to the work area.

Back to the front entry, a collection of crosses hangs over barnboard stairs leading to the walk-out level of the home. This level has a floor of acid-washed concrete.

"This room is meant to be Paul's gallery, but it also doubles as our rec room," says Kristin.

"A large sitting area has leather furniture and an entertainment centre, another ironstone fireplace, a bar area and doors opening to the covered patio.

"Another double-sided fireplace ties the rec room to Paul's office. One wall has a number of his works on display.

Horses from neighbouring properties occasionally "wander up and look in," says Paul, whose Western-style art focuses on cowboys, native people and horses. "I guess they want to see what I'm working on."

Beyond his office is another bedroom and



Brett Beadle, Calgary Herald
The table that sits 14, the chairs, the chandelier and sideboard all came from the couple's shopping spree in Mexico. The floor is century-old barnboard from B.C.

bath and at the end of the hall is a room for storing art supplies.

A door from this room leads to the garage above. A special ventilation system vents paint fumes directly outside.

Landscaping will likely have to wait until next year, but in the meantime, baby Isabella will be able to find all the nooks and crannies of the interior of Casa Van Ginkel.



Brett Beadle, Calgary Herald

The 'spine,' or main hallway, of the house includes several artworks.



Brett Beadle, Calgary Herald

Above, artist Paul Van Ginkel next to one of his works in his studio in the home.



Brett Beadle, Calgary Herald, and Paul Van Ginkel

Above, an ornate cross is part of the decorative touches. Right, saddles and a lariat on spiral stairs.

