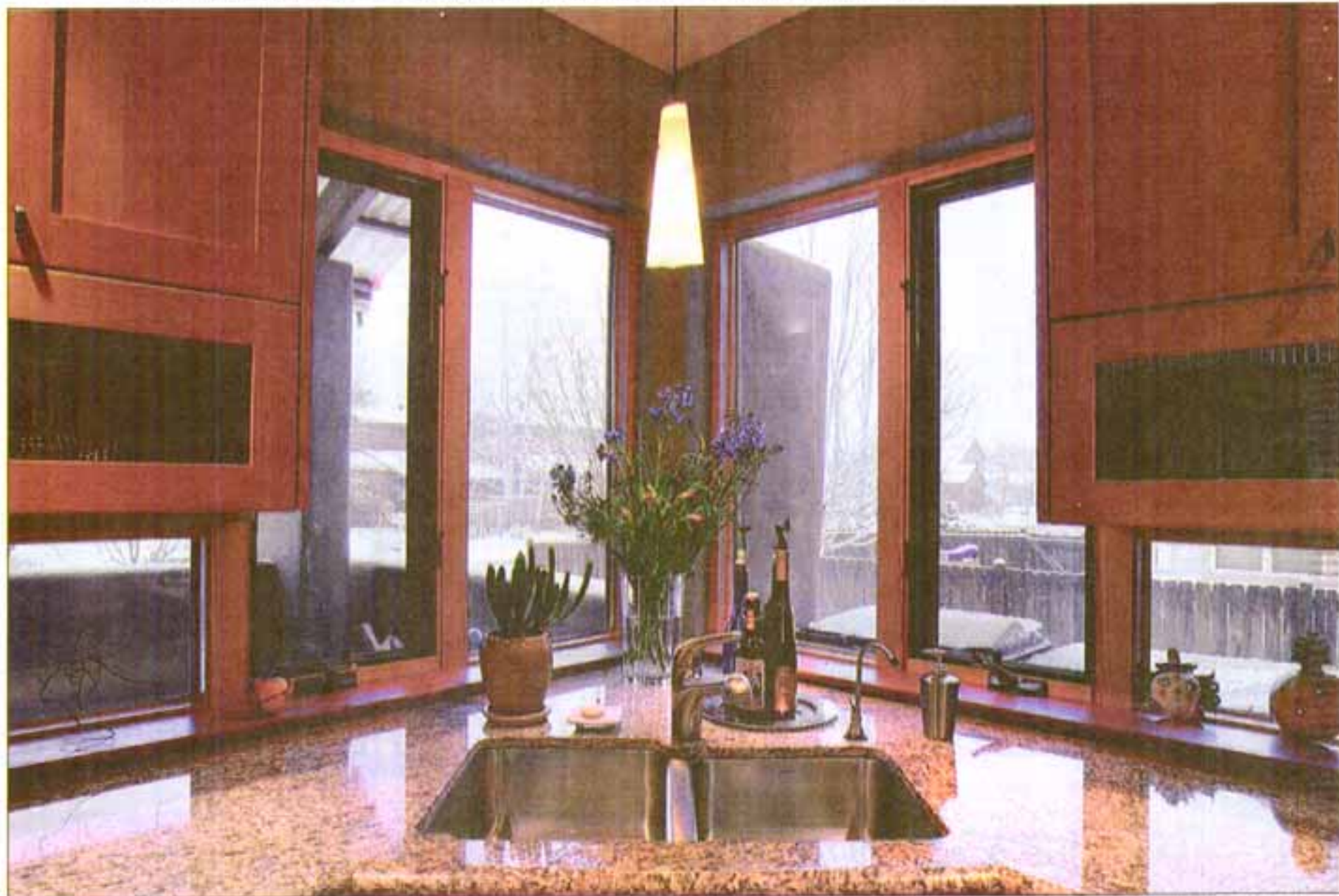


HOME FRONT

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The kitchen is tucked into a bright corner of the ecologically friendly Boulder home of architects David and Betzi Barrett. Fir trims the windows and fir

cabinets hang above the polished granite countertop with stainless-steel sinks. Expansive windows bring the outside into the home.

A softer shade of 'green'

Boulder architects build beauty into their eco-friendly home

By Betsy Lehdorff
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

Most people think a home built out of recycled materials is about as exciting as a cardboard box. Concrete floors and stucco walls, especially on a cold winter day, don't exactly sound cozy, although they are environmentally sound.

But when Boulder architects David and Betzi Barrett built an eco-friendly home for themselves and son, Will, they had the know-how to turn these materials into beauty. David was named AIA Colorado architect of the year for 2002, and his company, Barrett Studio Architects, was the organization's firm of the year in 1998.

"I think 'built green' suggests that there is a very limited selection of materials," Betzi says from a seat at the dining table. "But there are creative ways to use the materials that are out there."

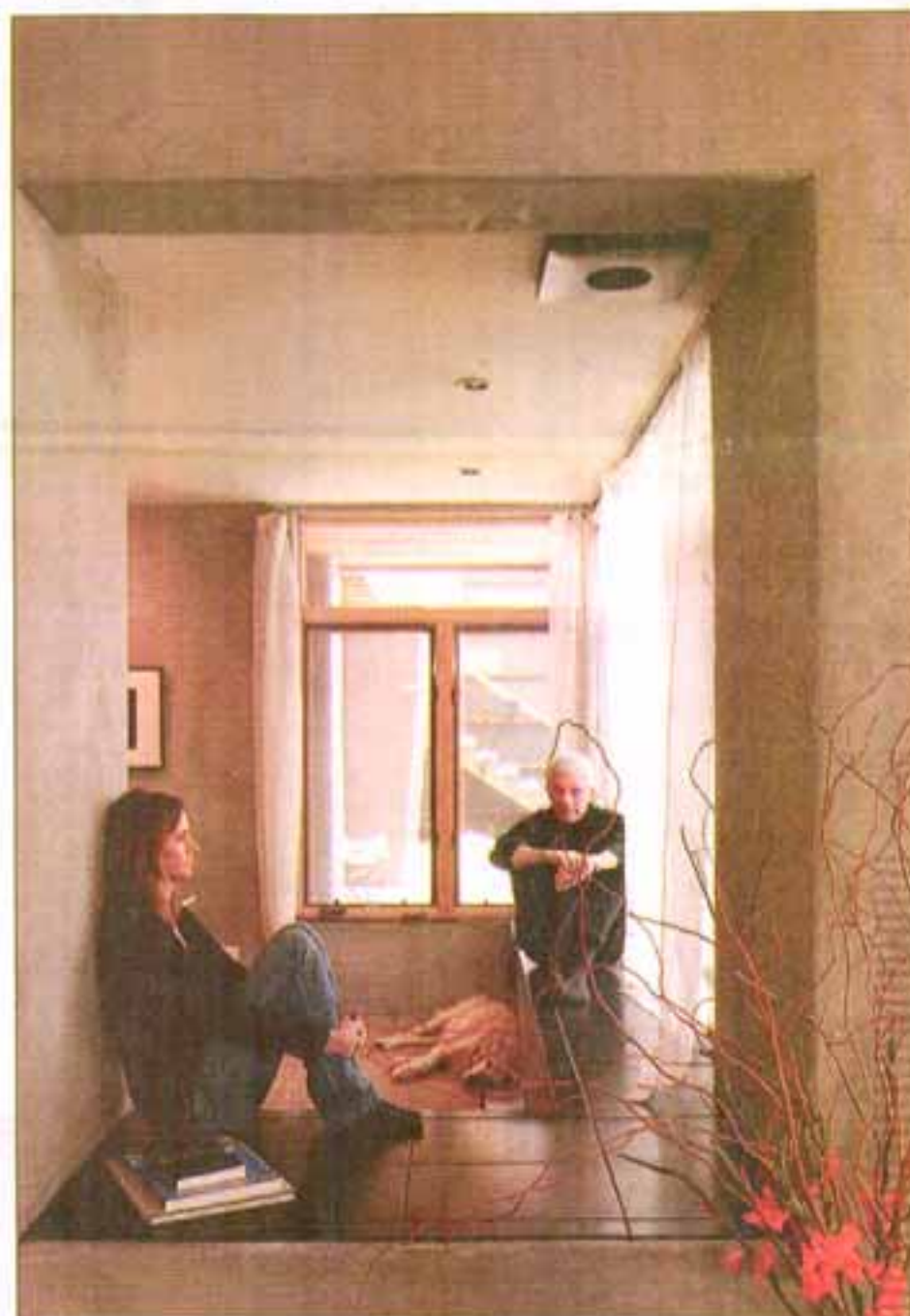
"There's also the opportunity to celebrate the environment and honor the place," David says pointing to a snow-coated apple tree beyond the window. It is about the only evidence left of a neighborhood orchard.

"That tree is so important to us," the 55-year-old says. "It shows some kind of gift every season — from a lattice of snow in winter to color in the spring, summer shade and fruit in the fall."

So they wrapped the design of their 2,500-square-foot home around it, allowing light to flood the interior. Then they broke up the look of their home's thick stucco walls with simple geometric shapes: squares of rippled concrete panels, rectangles of glass, parallel strips of fir and triangular blocks of concrete.

To add more variety, they topped their front porch with semi-transparent fiberglass. At night, it lights up like a Japanese lantern.

Flip to HOME on 4E



Betzi and David Barrett sit on window seats in the dining room of their Boulder home. Betzi against one of the 10-inch-thick Cempo walls, made from Portland cement and recycled polystyrene from computer packing materials. The blocks are a lightweight, yet sturdy, efficient building material. Story: 4E



One of the family favorites is the powder room Betzi decorated. The shower explodes with lively blue tiles. "I go in there and I want to dive into it like it's the Caribbean," David says.

Home: Entry roof sheds light on inside

Continued from 1E

Layer upon layer of architectural detail in the home plays with illumination, impressive considering the walls are Cempo, a dishwasher-gray mixture of cement and Styrofoam computer packing.

But building with these kinds of materials can be challenging. In particular, stucco can look mottled when applied by hand. Which is OK with the Barretts.

"We would come out here in the afternoon when the stucco was being applied and the crew would have their Mexican music blasting on the radio and they would be all over the house singing along," Betzi said.

That enthusiasm is reflected in the home, where color was applied in free, broad strokes.

One of the couple's challenges was the front of the house, which faces north. "By nature it's more closed down and darker," David says. So he created a front-porch entry topped with a translucent fiberglass roof. The design allows light into the home.

Inside the front door is a foyer which leads to the living room, an expansive space with views of the Rocky Mountains. Smoky stucco walls reach up to a pitched ceiling of fir boards and exposed beams.

The couple's carefully channeled flow of space leads to a honey-colored kitchen in a corner. Granite counters are enhanced by fir cabinets and a cork floor.

A few steps away, the dining area is rimmed with window seating.

One of the most colorful spots is a first-floor powder room, designed by Betzi. A white vessel sink rests on a thick glass countertop. In keeping with this simplicity, the vanity is fir, the floor is natural concrete. But the shower explodes with lively blue tiles.

"I go in there and I want to dive into it like it's the Caribbean," David says.

Up a flight of stairs are the family bedrooms. The master suite is compact, divided into a sleeping area, bath and dressing area by partial walls.

House walls provide strong supporting cast

X-ray the walls of David and Betzi Barrett's home and you'll find Cempo blocks made of Portland cement and recycled polystyrene from computer packaging.

"They look like large cinder blocks approximately 3-by-4 feet and 10 inches thick," says Sam Nishek, an architect at Barrett Studio. But the material is light. Each block weighs about 50 pounds and can be shaped with a chain saw.

To build a wall, the blocks are stacked on top of a foundation and tacked together



The Barretts broke up their Boulder home by varying roof lines, adding porches and cutting away corners. At the front of the home is an apple tree they

saved from being cut down. David Barrett says it is the only remaining evidence of a neighborhood orchard.



A corner fireplace adds warmth to the master bedroom. Behind the partial wall is a dressing area and the master bath.

Across the hall is a bedroom for the couple's 9-year-old son, Will. The benefit of being the child of architects is that his parents included a rock-climbing wall in the design.

The home's gutters also are creative. Chains serve as downspouts, guiding runoff to the ground.

"It's probably a luxury to have the time to think through and make all of the details beautiful as well as functional," David says. "Even better is when you've created a marriage between the details and the spirit of the place."

"There is a solidity about this house," Betzi adds. "It's not opulent. I just feel it's this nice space that allows us to live artfully."

The Details

What: Two-story home with separate studio over garage

Where: Boulder

Owners: David and Betzi Barrett

Architecture/interior design:

David and Betzi Barrett, Barrett

Studio Architects

Contractor: Dominique Gettiffe,

Gettiffe Construction, Boulder

Size: 2,500 square feet

Materials: Cempo, concrete, stucco,

bamboo, high-performance glass,

corrugated concrete roofing, fir and

broken rock.

er with foam adhesive to reduce the need for bracing, says Nishek, who has used them for residential and commercial projects. Reinforcing steel rods are inserted into holes in the blocks, then the holes are filled with concrete, creating a strong wall that can resist hurricanes, earthquakes, fires and even insects.

"It looks similar in appearance to concrete cinderblocks," he says. "But typically the finish is stucco on the exterior and plaster or drywall on the interior."

A fully finished Cempo wall costs ap-

proximately \$18 a square foot, he says. A conventional wood frame wall with stucco finish is about \$15 a square foot.

"But you get approximately 1½ times the insulating value and you get four times the fire resistance," Nishek says. "It also increases the thermal mass in the house, which in turn regulates temperature swings on a daily basis." Like adobe, the thick walls take longer to heat up, but also longer to cool down, he says.

Betsy Lehnhoff



The living room features a fir ceiling and exposed beams. Behind the angled wall is a foyer where coats can be hung in a recess. The Barretts broke up the interior space with simple geometric shapes such as this angular concrete partition.