

ARCHITECTS AT HOME



THE
LOCAL PROJECT



ARCHITECTS AT HOME

THE LOCAL PROJECT

Leopold Banchini Madeleine Blanchfield Greg & Lesa Faulkner Adriana Hanna Conrad Johnston Nick Kent Joseph Lovell & Stephanie Burton Rob Mills
Ingrid Richards & Adrian Spence Chris Stribley Peter Stutchbury Telly Theodore & Andrew Macdonald John Wardle Monique & Scott Woodward Brian Zulaikha



Faulkner .

Greg and Lesa Faulkner
Truckee, California, United States

Home to Greg and Lesa Faulkner, Analog House stands as a serene retreat in Martis Valley – a down-to-earth collaboration with Tom Kundig of Olson Kundig that keeps nature front and centre.

Words Vaishnavi Nayel Talawadekar
Photography Yoshihiro Makino

A few times a year, Greg and Lesa Faulkner leave their residence in San Francisco and disappear into the wilds of Martis Valley, a forested Californian vale on the outskirts of Truckee, near Lake Tahoe, the United States’ largest alpine lake. Their retreats are far from casual escapes; they’re purposeful returns. Years ago, the couple – Greg, the founder and principal of California-based Faulkner Architects, and Lesa, who oversees interior design at the firm – acquired a 10,000-square-metre parcel in the highland, with a promise to honour the land in their effort to make it home. Set at 2,100 metres above sea level and cloaked in towering Jeffrey and Ponderosa pines, tangled manzanita and the crisp perfume of wild sage, the site doesn’t just invite attention but reverence.

In the couple’s eyes, a landscape this pristine was meant to remain undisturbed. If they were to build anything at all, it would need to grow out of the terrain – something that felt discovered rather than imposed, like a whisper in the woods. Believing the project needed an outside perspective, Greg invited architect Tom Kundig, principal of Seattle-based Olson Kundig – drawn to his

expressive use of kinetic mechanisms, steel plates and the nuanced tension between raw and refined – to shape the home’s response to its extraordinary setting.

As Kundig explains, the architecture took cues from nature. “I remember walking onto the site for the first time and hearing Greg and Lesa describe their future home as a journey through the forest – one that would preserve the magnificent trees rather than displace them – and I wholeheartedly agreed,” he says. By the same token, the design responds to the mature Ponderosa pines that dominate the landscape, shaping the home both structurally and spiritually. Like navigating a forest trail, the built form subtly shifts and reorients itself, yielding to the trees and quietly forming the perimeter for a number of outdoor spaces, including a central courtyard, a wraparound balcony between the kitchen and dining room, and smaller zones off the living room and main bedroom. Anything that predated the construction was thoughtfully retained, including the large setbacks on all sides.

If there’s one tradition the Faulknors hold dear, it’s spending holidays with family,





The home functions like a perimeter, tracing the property's outdoor spaces and established trees. Greg and Lesa Faulkner were guided by a vision of a dwelling that would mirror journeying through the forest.

cooking outdoors on the Argentinian grill and dining with the large doors flung open to the landscape. “We follow that with after-dinner drinks on the roof deck to watch the stars,” comments Greg. On evenings when the weather doesn’t cooperate, the indoors offer a welcome retreat. The views are no less captivating inside, thanks to expansive glass walls and open-air spaces that blur the line between wilderness and structure, making it nearly impossible to tell where nature ends and architecture begins.

For Greg and Lesa, it’s proximity to the elements, even while indoors, that makes the home an oasis unto itself. In the living room, upper-level clerestory windows draw sunlight deep into the space, while a glass-walled ‘forest hall’ – a prismatic passage with panoramic views – serves as a

transitional interlude, separating the volume with the living area and primary suite from the one that houses the kitchen and dining room. The primary suite continues the theme of quiet sophistication, unfolding as a series of subtly defined spaces: a sitting room, an open casework closet, a sleeping area and a bath. The bed, designed by the couple, faces the trees, while the bathroom opens onto a serene private courtyard.

Where the architects couldn’t frame the landscape, they brought it all the way inside. The floors are clad in flamed basalt, echoing the boulders outside, and oak inlays sourced from within an 80-kilometre radius add warmth underfoot. For walls without glazing, the team used sandblasted concrete, revealing a rugged, rock-like texture that grounds the interiors in the alpine setting.



Unlike most of Olson Kundig's projects, the Faulkners' home does not prioritise a single view; instead, vistas are framed, with glass walls and open-air spaces blurring the distinction between inside and out.



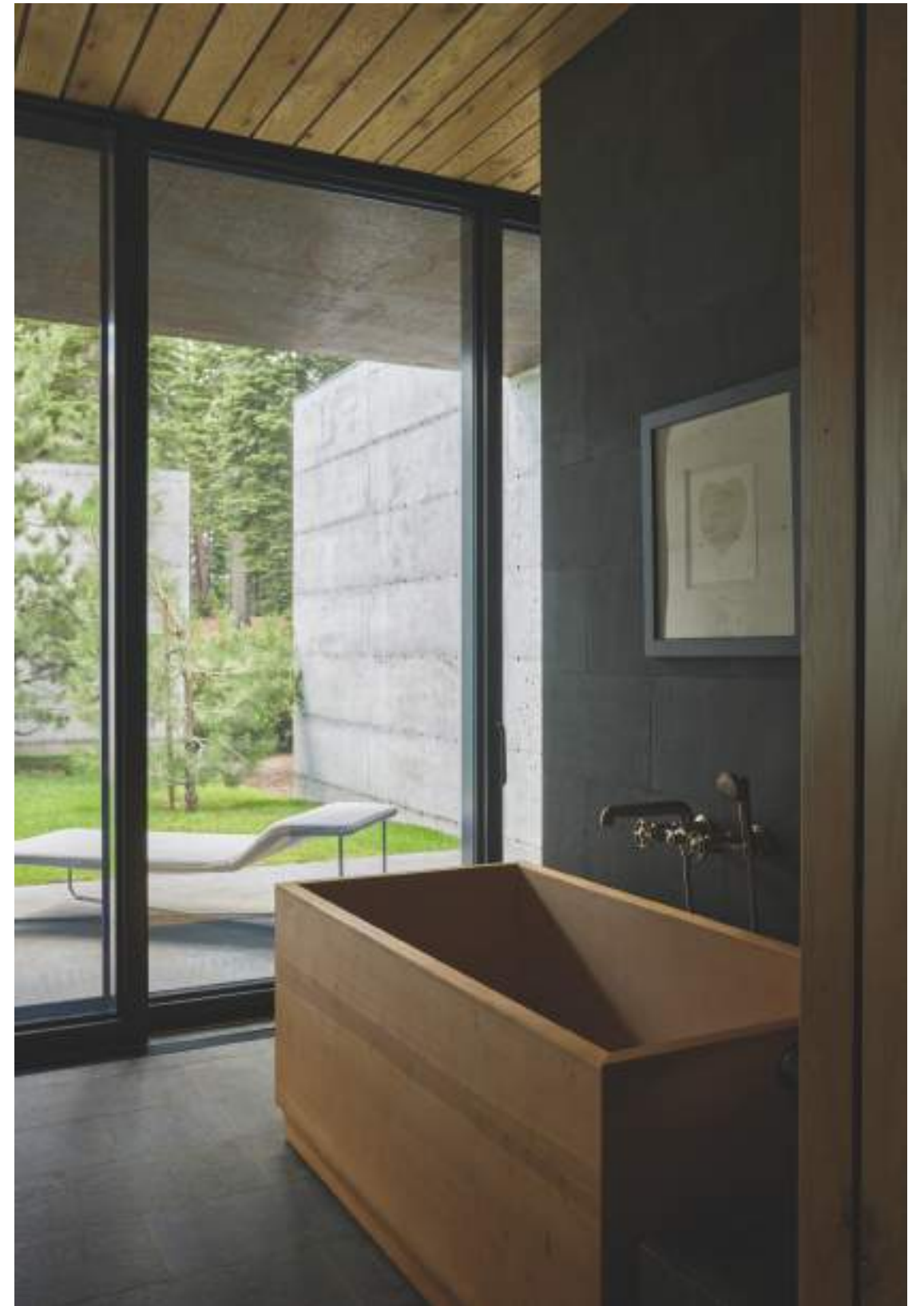


"I remember walking onto the site for the first time and hearing Greg and Lesa describe their future home as a journey through the forest – one that would preserve the magnificent trees rather than displace them – and I wholeheartedly agreed."





“Greg and Lesa have lived and worked here for years, and they knew wildfire mitigation would be central to the design of their new home. We had to consider the resilience of every design decision.”



The home speaks to the landscape in subtle ways, including the floors, which are clad in basalt, a nod to the boulders beyond, and feature locally sourced oak inlays.



Yet it's the steel tower that Kundig cites as the home's tour de force. "It's a riff on the traditional treehouse," he says of the three-storey column, which soars above the main residence, housing bedrooms and attached bathrooms for guests and a rooftop terrace with picturesque vistas. Solid steel cladding shields the street-facing side, while clear glazing envelops the other, letting the trees form canopies overhead. "The site is very different from our typical projects, where there's a big, outstanding view that becomes an obvious gesture of the house. Greg and Lesa didn't want that, so instead the tower is meant to provide a kind of bird's nest experience," says Kundig.

In many ways, the couple prepared as much for the known as the unknown. "Greg and Lesa have lived and worked here for years, and they knew wildfire mitigation would be central to the design of their new

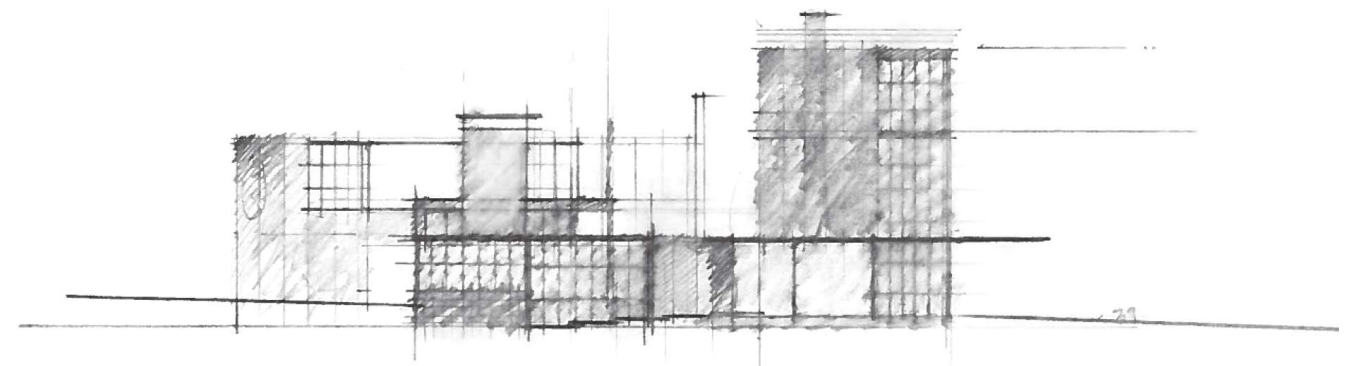
home. We had to consider the resilience of every design decision," says Kundig. Greg puts a finer point on it. "The Caldor Fire of 2021 came within 40 kilometres of the house and destroyed over 1,000 structures. We have been aware of this threat for years and implemented non-combustible and protected material systems into the built form," he reveals, his words ringing true in a cascade of interventions. Built form exists where foliage never did and glazed passages thread through the landscape, linking spaces that echo the original rhythm of the forest.

The structural skeleton – composed of steel and engineered wood – is clad in a durable 10-gauge weathering steel exterior, its textured finish mirroring the ruggedness of the landscape. Glazed openings are filled with tempered glass, while the most expansive panes are recessed within walled courtyards, creating pockets of filtered light,

seclusion and a gentle buffer between the built form and the forest beyond. "These decisions helped ensure that the house became fully insured against wildfire under the homeowners' policy. After completion, a new policy was acquired and the house received a 10 out of 10 for fire preparedness, even though trees are close to the structure," adds Kundig.

The motivation to tread lightly is reflected in the material palette, guided by an ethos of sustainability. The steel frame, glass doors and exterior rainscreen were fabricated using recycled steel and the wood structure incorporates engineered studs, joists and rafters to maximise efficiency and reduce waste. Similarly, insulated double-concrete walls offer strength, fire resistance and thermal mass for heat retention, and the flat, horizontal roofs are designed to hold snow, adding an extra layer of insulation.





Tom Kundig describes the three-storey steel tower that soars above the main residence as a "riff on the traditional treehouse". The structure includes guest bedrooms and bathrooms, plus a rooftop terrace where the couple enjoys after-dinner drinks with their guests.

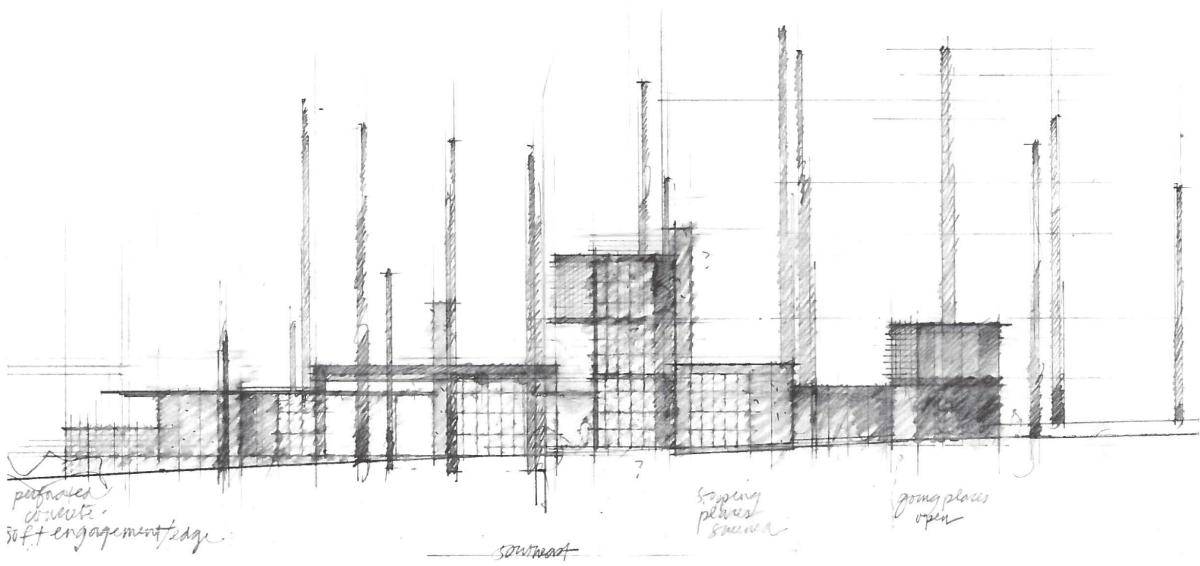


Greg says that entrusting another architect with his and Lesa's vision was "a truly engaging experience and ultimately a time of rapid growth for me personally as an architect. Tom and our project architect, Steve Grim, were incredibly gracious and humble, welcoming Lesa and I fully into their process. Lesa and Tom really clicked – he'd revise layouts I had worked on, and Tom would just smile and say, 'we can make architecture out of that.' I loved that. It's rare to see that kind of

openness from one of the best architects on the planet. It was a partnership that evolved into a collaboration, which evolved into a friendship." Kundig echoes the sentiment. "Once the work began, there was an immediate understanding between us – it felt like designing through conversation. It was, without a doubt, one of the most satisfying architectural dialogues I've ever been part of. We felt like true collaborators – more colleagues than client and architect."



“Once the work began, there was an immediate understanding between us – it felt like designing through conversation. It was, without a doubt, one of the most satisfying architectural dialogues I’ve ever been part of.”



The Faulkners were determined to tread lightly on the site, preserving trees where possible. Even so, the home has achieved a strong fire rating, a result of decisions made throughout the design process, which prioritised the longevity and safety of the dwelling.



