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HOUSE of LIGHT, ART & STYLE

*Rika Peterson's
gallery-inspired home*

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Light, Art and Style

by ELLEN SANTASIERO

photography by SIMONE PADDOCK

Gallery ambience permeates a Bend painter's home

Rika Peterson's home is all about the view. Not the view *from* Rika's house in northeast Bend: You can't see the mountains or the desert, or even the river, for that matter.

It's the view *of* the house that is memorable. From the moment you arrive—and wait as a wrought-iron gate slowly opens to let your car into the driveway—to the instant you turn around and gaze at the house from the west end of the long, one-acre lot, the house continually asks you to stop and see.

This is no accident. Rika designed the house herself, and as an artist she knows a thing or two about perspective.

And what is there to see? Smooth, white walls; clean, uninterrupted lines; sweeping vistas; windows that frame stately ponderosa pines. Most important, you see the artist's large-scale oil paintings, which the house was primarily built to display.

Peterson designed the interior of the house to look and feel like an art gallery—from the white walls and oak floors to the noticeable absence of knickknacks and clutter.

A native of Japan, Rika moved into the 3,500-square-foot house in November 2003. She comments that because she is Asian, many people immediately assume her house was designed with Asian architecture in mind.

"I wasn't necessarily going for an Asian style," she says. Instead, she took the Bauhaus style as her model. Germany's most important school of modern architecture in the first part of the 20th century, the Bauhaus was characterized by a simple, symmetrical, angular and functional approach.

Rika's house, with its sleek lines and absence of adornment—there are no window coverings, for instance—is quintessential Bauhaus. Even though the decor is spare, the house still seems full: full of light, full of art and full of style.



A Design of Her Own

Rika moved to the United States to attend art school in the mid-1980s. After attending college in Massachusetts, she moved to New York City to finish school and begin life as a painter. There she met her husband; a few years later, they moved to Bend via San Francisco.

Upon their move to Central Oregon, the Petersons set about building a log home south of Bend near the Deschutes River, cutting and hauling the logs themselves. That first house, says Rika, who is now divorced, could not have been more different from her new one. The “dark and bumpy” walls were the exact opposite of the light and smooth ones she lives among today.

When Rika decided to build her new house, she listened to input from other designers but preferred a design of her own. She then plugged her ideas into a home-design computer program and hired a draftsman to create the blueprints.

Rika’s house is as much about what you can’t see as what you can. There are no boxy televisions here; hers are built into the walls. Neither are there kitchen appliances with snaky electrical cords. “I didn’t even want to see a book,” she says.

There are no shelves, no knickknacks. Well, one knick and two knacks: A whimsical nutcracker lies on the coffee table; a wood finial the size of a pineapple graces the dining-room table; and a carved wooden monk prays on the sideboard. But everything else is either tucked away behind cabinet doors or is just not there at all.

The few Asian elements Rika did include fit well with the home’s overall look. In the entryway—a glass-enclosed rectangle that vaults skyward—a painting of the Buddha greets visitors in earthy ochers, duns and browns. Facing this icon is one of Rika’s large abstract oils; in the upper center of this canvas, shining in gold leaf, is a round Japanese kanji that stands for “time.”

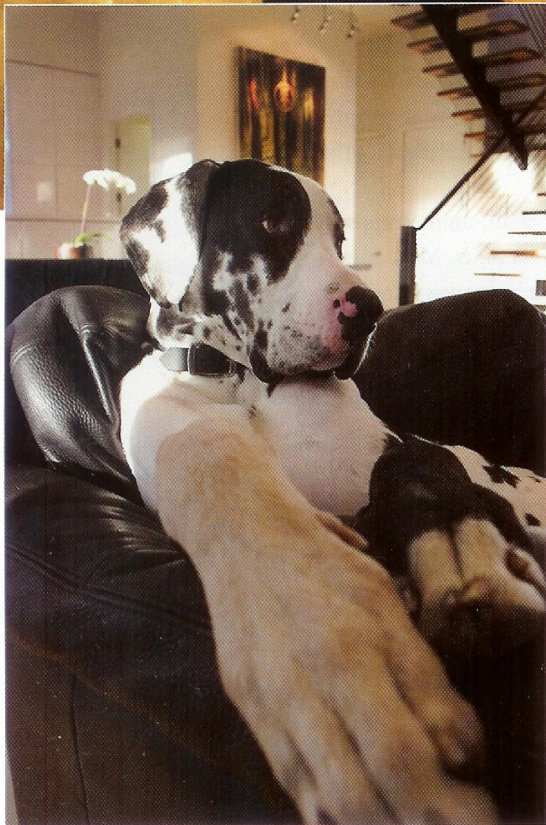
The floor in the entry is of polished black granite flecked with cool white and blue. Two matching granite blocks, which serve as small tables, stand next to two solid doors. One door leads to a small guest apartment. The other opens onto a large downstairs room with the living room at one end, a long dining table and chairs in the middle and the kitchen at the far end.

When Rika or her guests enter this room, they face a gas fireplace. Just above it, three televisions—one large and two small—run the same video, ever-moving whorls and blots of neon green and pink, making the space feel even more like a modern art gallery.

Texture, Shape and Text

Rika is a master of composition. Everywhere she looks in her house she sees balanced, pleasing arrangements of line, texture and shape.

She knew to balance the light—hard and reflective walls, floor and windows—with a chunky, soft black leather couch and chairs. The curving, velvety petals of fresh flowers seem to float across the rich ironwood dining table.



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If you're thinking the house sounds too formal, Rika's merry disposition would change your mind. She has help from Andy Warhol and Mick Jagger: two very large, very friendly one-year-old Great Danes who think nothing of trying to climb into a visitor's lap.

While Rika's guests sit on the couch and negotiate with the dogs, they look directly toward the kitchen at the other end of the room—but they don't see anything that even remotely says "kitchen." Instead, their eyes go straight to a large window on the north wall that frames ponderosa pines and a shot of cobalt sky. All the china, appliances and pantry items are stowed neatly in a bank of white cabinets that Rika found at Home Depot, along with a nice collection of stemware: She is a part-time wine distributor for Portland-based Grape Expectations. Even the refrigerator hides behind a cabinet door. A chest-high center island is sheathed in white; its placement in front of the north window creates a galley kitchen.

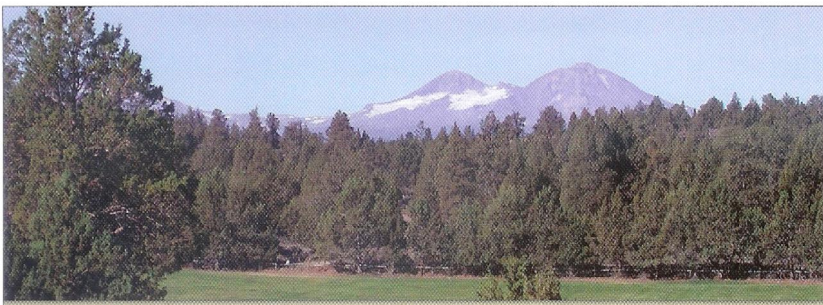
Thanks to a neat row of windows in the upper story, the stairwell brims with light. It leads to the master bedroom, furnished simply and functionally with a bed and two end tables. The bathroom—its tub and shower side-by-side in a glass-enclosed, tiled space—is a typical Japanese arrangement.

The other upstairs room is Rika's vast studio. Here the air is redolent with the smell of oil paint. The floor is a practical plywood, good for paint splatters. Dozens and dozens of silver tubes of oil paint lie in neat rows on a wheeled tray table. A leather couch nestles unobtrusively under the north windows, with stacks of *Art News* magazine nearby.

Color and Freedom

Color dominates Rika's current pieces, some of which are on display at Marz Planetary Bistro, in downtown Bend. Her style is reminiscent of the work of Marc Cha-





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gall, the Russian-born French painter whose career, Peterson says, influences her own. In one painting, a human figure swoops down beside a Madonna and child. But mostly, squiggly stems, paddle-shaped leaves and other plant forms spring from her sumptuously colored backgrounds.

Plant imagery may flourish on Rika's canvases, but in her backyard she keeps vegetation to a minimum. Not only does that make for easy maintenance, but it extends the spacious sparseness of her home's interior to the outside. To create the parklike setting she wanted, Peterson thinned some junipers, leaving neatly pruned singles and tasteful groupings of three, and closely cropped the grass.

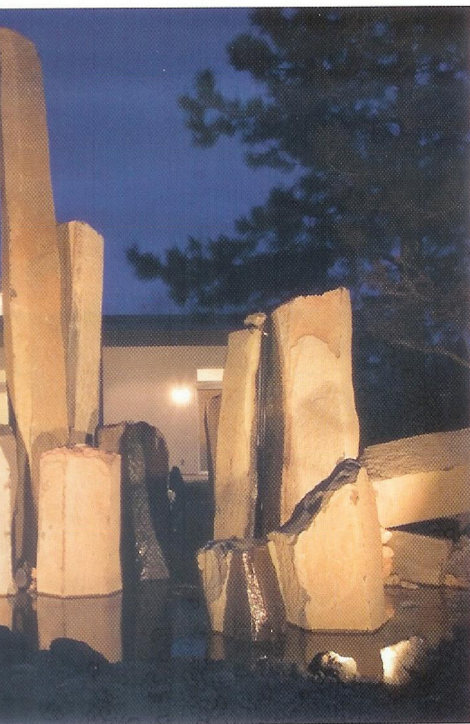
Rika spends a lot of time outside. When she steps through her sliding glass doors, a water feature rivets her eye with its gigantic basalt columns—some standing, some tumbled to the side, looking like a section of the cracked, majestic rimrock found high above the Deschutes River. This feature was a collaboration with local designer Ripple Effect.

Peterson says she first looked for a lot on Awbrey Butte, but she had a difficult time finding just the right piece of land for the style of house and yard she envisioned. She



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found the perfect setting near Hollinshead Park, on a street with both '70s-era ranches and horse pastures.

She says she never felt that she had to change her vision in order to fit into a particular neighborhood or lot size. And that's one of the things Rika likes best about her adopted country: She doesn't feel pressure to fit in.



"In Japan you're expected to follow everybody else. Even for the artists, tradition is more important there," she says.

"I like my freedom here. I feel more free-spirited." 

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