



THE NOE VALLEY VOICE

Architecture— Some Like It Modern



This striking house at 415 Diamond Street, designed by Alex and Ivan Terry, was cited for excellence by the American Institute of Architects in 2009. *Photo by Ethan Kaplan*

By Corrie M. Anders

Take a stroll along almost any Noe Valley street and you'll see an eclectic assortment of Victorian houses. They make an indelible impression with their bay windows, gabled roofs, turrets, and decorative gingerbread—a legacy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

But vying for attention among the Queen Annes, Italianates, and Stick-East-lakes are some new ultramodern buildings. These are homes whose sleek cubist façades—fashioned with glass, chrome, and concrete—declare their 21st-century sophistication.

"People are a lot more receptive these days to modern architecture in Noe Valley. I see more younger people embracing



Elizabethan Color. Bougainvillea graces many sunny spots in San Francisco, but few are brighter than Noe Valley's Elizabeth Street between Vickiburg and Church. Throughout the year, these south-facing plantings burst with a palette both regal and cool. *Photo by Jack Tippie*

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Town Square Begins at Square One

By Heather World

A play structure with illustrations of neighborhood history, a skateboard rail, an outdoor movie theater, a food bank. These were some of the visions for a Noe Valley town square generated by neighbors at a community meeting this summer.

Hosted by the Friends of Noe Valley and the Neighborhood Parks Council, the July 15 gathering of about 80 people was the first step toward turning the parking lot at 24th Street and Vicksburg into a public space that would likely host the popular weekly farmer's market and more.

"There was a lot of community buy-in, a lot of cooperation," said Todd David, a Eureka Street resident who is spearheading the effort to acquire the lot. The 10,000-square-foot open space is half owned by the Noe Valley Ministry, which needs to sell it in part to finance an ambitious remodel of its Gothic-style building on Sanchez Street. David, the ministry, and others are working on getting the land into the public realm rather than

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Noe Cultivates a Taste for Modern Architecture

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more frequency."

The trend should not cause palpitations among Victorian purists, however. Yenne and others, like architect Jim Zack, say most homebuilders are "staying safe" and continuing to construct traditional homes in Noe Valley. And because San Francisco's strict building code makes residential demolition difficult, many homeowners are opting to keep the building's facade and just renovate the interior.

"That said," says Zack, "there are enough examples of people doing contemporary spec homes to say there is more and more of it. It is growing and becoming more popular."

Atsuko Watanabe is among the modern-home enthusiasts. The marketing professional, who has lived in high-ceiling lofts in New York and stylish digs in Paris, was immediately enchanted when she found a space to her tastes in the modern duplex at 110 Chattanooga Street at 22nd Street.

The building, which has two side-by-side condo units, sports a tall, boxy design that contrasts sharply with the frilly Victorians a few doors away. Its cool, gray facade is covered in corrugated metal panels, flat stucco, and glass. A central stairway fills each "box" with natural light through soaring windows, and there are no interior walls to encumber access to the kitchen, dining, and living rooms.

"I love that openness, of not having enclosed doors," says Watanabe.

Zack and his wife, Lise de Vito, principals of Zack/de Vito Architecture in the SoMa District, built the Chattanooga Street home for themselves in 2003. The couple lived in the property until 2008, when they moved to another modern home they constructed in Glen Park.

Zack notes there were "a number of pretty nice Victorian buildings on Chattanooga Street," including two on either side of his project, that had been remodeled over the years "to the point they were no longer Victorians."

In 2006, the Noe Valley house was cited for its design excellence by the San Francisco chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

Other contemporary buildings in Noe Valley have also won critical acclaim. Earlier this year, both a local and national panel of AIA judges picked the home at 415 Diamond Street (near 21st Street) as a design winner.

"It was a happy surprise," says Alex Terry, who designed the home with his



Though it has tall bay windows, the mostly cube-free townhouse at 110 Chattanooga Street stands in stark contrast to the Victorians down the block. Photo courtesy Zack/de Vito Architecture



Horizontal lines and dramatic lighting distinguish this five-bedroom house at 767 27th Street, which in August had a price tag of \$3,095,000. Photo by John D. Hayes

brother, Ivan. Both are principals at Berkeley-based Terry & Terry Architecture.

The AIA lauded the building as "crisp and sculptural, exquisitely detailed," and said "it evokes a remarkable sense of nature in the middle of the city."

The unusual design has a dramatic cantilevered roof overhanging its concrete, glass, and slatted-wood facade. Inside are thick exposed-concrete walls that are softened by wood floors and ceilings, panoramic windows that let "you see the fog rolling in" from Twin Peaks, and a sky-light cemerred above a floating staircase.

"It's not for everybody," concedes Alex Terry, who lives in the house with his wife, Colleen Bal, and their two children, Sofia and Anabella. But few would doubt the emotional impact. "It's a very

soothing and tranquil place for me," says Terry. "There's a calmness that it produces when you're in the space."

So how many ultramodern homes have gone up in Noe Valley in the last 10 years? Neither the city's Planning Department nor the real estate professionals the Voice contacted were able to pin down a number. "There are probably a dozen," guessed former local resident Jason Allen-Rouman, president of the Victorian Alliance, a San Francisco preservationist organization.

One of the newest is a four-bedroom home at 465 Hoffman Avenue near 25th Street. Completed last year, it has a 600-pound steel gate that looks like a Mondrian painting (in fact, it was designed by San Francisco artist Brian Ford of Metropolis Design). The house, which has a spacious atrium lined with black slate, has two stories in the front, but expands to four at the back, with enough windows and terraces to resemble a glass ziggurat.

Such a cutting-edge style appeals to a "very narrow segment of the marketplace," admits San Francisco architect Joel Karr, a principal with Group 41, who designed the house.

It also requires a certain income level. The Hoffman property was on the market for several months before it sold in March for \$2,970,000.

According to Karr and other housing specialists, the current interest in modern houses in the heart of a neighborhood rich in Victorian history has been sparked by a new generation of younger, sophisticated residents well acquainted with *Dwell* magazine, Ikea furniture, and other contemporary icons. Many are well-paid, high-tech workers.

"They're part of a younger, hipper crowd rather than the old money crowd,"



An aerodynamic roof and wall-to-wall glass give the back of this ultramodern home at 415 Diamond Street a space age feel. Photo courtesy Terry & Terry Architecture



The architect incorporated cedar, stone, aluminum, colored stucco, slate, and glass to enhance the contemporary style of this four-bedroom home at 4381 26th Street. Photo by Mark Brand



Built to take advantage of a steep slope, this glass-coated house at 465 Hoffman Avenue resembles a futuristic temple. Photo courtesy Group 41

time has given contemporary treatment to half a dozen homes in the area. One, designed five years ago, is a four-bedroom home at 4381 26th Street (below Douglass) that Vanguard Properties currently lists for \$2,479,000.

Modern fans, many of whom also desire to be "green," often reason that 100-year-old houses are more expensive and difficult to maintain than newer homes. "It takes a lot to keep those [Victorians] up," says Allen-Rouman.

But Joseph Pugliese of Design Solutions, a 24th Street firm that designs and builds homes, thinks contemporary homes aren't the only trend in the neighborhood. He says older residences remodeled with shingled exteriors and black trim have also become popular. A few years ago, Pugliese gave his own Arts and Crafts home on Alvarado Street a shingled makeover.

"After we did ours, there were like six or seven or eight popping up all over the place," says Pugliese.

Still, it is the avant-garde look that is most striking amid the Victorian bosc-a-brac.

"It makes a more interesting city in many respects," says Alex Terry. "It's nice to see a contrast between the Victorians and the more traditional houses and some of the newer structures that are

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