



HIS MAJESTY

A mountain-inspired house in Julian leads the owner of a design/build company and his team to cast the tried and true to the wind



Before dusk at the front entry of Gregg and Debby Hamann's house on the land that was once part of the majestic mine claim.

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A zero-carbonfootprint, fireproof, concrete house with an observation tower and compound curves everywhere. Through the Aaron Copland music played by the door bell on Gregg and Debby Hamann's house in Julian sounds appropriately grand, its title - Fanfare for the Common Man - contradicts what lies before you. Even calling the El Cajon couple's mountain retreat "uncommon" doesn't do it justice. The inspiration for its swooping design, however, is appropriately majestic. "Volcan Mountain is immediately north [of the property]. That was Gregg's vision for how the house should look," says Paul Giese, architect and chief project manager for Hamann Companies, which executed the design/build. "He came back from a vacation with a clay model showing a roof that mimicked the mountain."

The rest of the backstory reveals more unconventionality. Greg's brother Jeff bought the property because it provided a great launching point for his favorite sport of paragliding. He later decided he didn't need a second vacation home and sold the 14 acres to his natureloving brother.

Defying standard logic, Gregg's motivation to begin building on the site was the 2007-2009 recession and its repercussions. "The house was originally conceived as something to keep our guys busy," Gregg says, referring to employees of Hamann Companies, which specializes in commercial and industrial structures. "Instead of laying people off, we gave them something interesting to do."

That "something interesting" - a zerocarbon-footprint, fireproof, concrete house with an observation tower and compound curves everywhere - took about three years to complete, not only because of the complexity of the project, but also because the economy picked up.

"It became the cobbler's shoes," Gregg says.

"Whenever we had work, my guys worked elsewhere."

Acknowledging that his vision for a pouredin-place, stratified-concrete residence turned into a pricey endeavor, Gregg refers to it as "a job-list house," meaning an individual could ask his company for design aspects and construction techniques innovated and perfected on the Julian test bed.

While the curvy structure and tower command attention as you reach the house from a long driveway, you can't miss the "cherry" on top: a helical wind turbine that generates power from any direction.

"People have thought I put it there for aesthetics," Gregg says. "When beauty follows form, that's really cool."

The 4,435-square-foot house, which sits on the Majestic mine claim of the 1870s gold rush in Julian, was built with 5 feet of polystyrene foam, covered by 8 inches of concrete. Poured in ragged-edged layers of cedar, onyx, antique gold, marigold and desert tan to match the colors in the on-site quartz, the concrete resembles earth stratified by epochs. A band of quartz from the property and small seashells add to the sedimentary effect.





Above and right: The great room running along the center of the house encompasses a seating area for the viewing the panorama across the mountains and canyons, a cozy retreat under a "cloud" ceiling and two areas for dining: at a table made by one of Gregg's brothers and along a curved, raised bar on one end of the kitchen. The 22- foot ceiling was built with curved concrete beams poured into radiused, rigidfoam insulation to create a ribbed effect and enhance acoustics.



Veins of quartz also run through the underside of the concrete porte-cochere, which is accented with glass tile by artist James Hubbell of nearby Santa Ysabel. At night, the underside of the 50-by-25-foot portico welcomes visitors with a constellation of 300 fiber-optic lights embedded in the concrete.

James additionally created stained-glass works for the front of the house and the pivothinge, cherry wood front door with stone and metal insets and a painted-copper handle.

The front door opens to a great room, the far end of which offers a panoramic view of Granite Mountain and the Banner Pass. To support the 34-foot span, construction called for 12-by-12-foot beams. But since anything square would have been incongruous in a structure with no straight lines, foam was used to create undulations for a plaster finish overhead. The only flat part of the room is the floor, which is concrete that was ground to expose aggregate, then sealed and polished.

Acoustics were an important aspect of the design. Speakers buried behind the plaster walls bring music as if by magic into the east end of the room. At the other end of the room is an 1867 Steinway grand piano. "Sound never dies, because it circulates around the curves," Gregg says. "There are no parallel walls."

Along one side of the great room is the kitchen, which features curved cabinets with curved doors and drawers and a curved kitchen island made of poured-in-place concrete. David Frisk, an Encinitas-based artist specializing in custom woodwork, designed and installed the figure.

Just right of the front entry is the tower, which leads down to a 40-foot tunnel to the garage and up to an observation deck.

The original idea was to make the tower by modifying a standard tank from a manufacturer in Fresno. But they ended up having the manufacturer make a custom one - 14 feet in diameter and 35 feet tall - from COR-TEN steel. After installation, the interior was plastered and painted with a warm, coppery faux finish resembling stone.

The cantilevered treads for the tower stairway were welded to the tower and filled with

concrete around aluminum piping to create holes for embedding LED lights to shine up and down. The stainless steel railing and guardrails are supported by curved pickets, a design element carried out on a greatroom loft and on the deck over the garage that was built into the terrain. Gregg's soninlaw, Matthew Jones, made the pickets, as

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Fiber-optic lights create a starlit "sky" on the ceiling of the porte-cochere, which also features veins of quartz from the property. James Hubbell created the door and circular window.



well as a stainless steel ladder that hangs on the back side of the tower, ready to be used for access to the loft.

The observation room at the top of the tower includes more of David's handiwork: a figured maple desk built into the space under a window facing Volcan Mountain. Even though Gregg can gaze at stars through the tower skylight, he likes to climb out of the window on the right side of the desk and enjoy views from the roof of Palomar Observatory in the distant west and as far as the Salton Sea to the east.

In functional terms, the tower is part of the home's passive temperature-control and ventilation system (the home has no forcedair heating or cooling). Opening the tower skylight allows hot air to escape, while cool air from a nearby canyon is drawn into the house through two earth tubes buried 10 feet underground. A figured maple door crafted by David and hanging from a rail mounted on the tower slides across the opening to keep warm air from escaping living spaces in winter.

Beyond the tower on the main floor are three bedrooms, each offering views in two directions and each with its own bathroom. On the north side of the house, the master suite provides views in three directions - most importantly, toward Volcan Mountain. The floor, Gregg points out, is sloped imperceptibly to capitalize on the view from the bed.

Around the outside of the house are curving pathways and patios, some sections made from the on-site quartz and others from stained and sealed urbanite (broken concrete) from on-site construction and other Hamann Companies jobs. Recycling concrete from the slab poured for the roof, Gregg made seven meditation benches and two picnic tables. He left the landscaping natural (oak and pine woodlands and chaparral), though he did add a bit of native planting.

"I took clippings from a few manzanita to a nursery, where they rooted them and I planted them one year later," he says. "Eighty percent survived."

"The house is more attractive than I thought it would be," Gregg admits. "I have spent more time here than I thought I would."









Concrete walls were poured in place in hued layers to create the look of stratified earth. The concrete roof was poured on the ground and lifted into place by crane.

In every aspect of the property, he committed himself to the environment (see "Green Features"). He made only one concession and that was for his parasailing brother.

"I had to leave him a 50-foot run," he says.

By: Janice Kleinschmidt

Photography by: Martin Mann

This article was featured in San Diego Home/Garden Lifestyles magazine. Pouredin-place, Type K stratified concrete was used. For more information on the concrete visit CTScement.com.

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The master bedroom offers views in three directions (front view not shown). The interior wall is stratified concrete like the exterior of the house.



At Stonehaven, plan configuration and product choices were made with the specific intention of minimizing total power usage rather than simply adding more photo-voltaic cells.

GREEN FEATURES:

- Siting to capture sun from the south in the winter and wide overhangs to protect the house from sun in the summer
- Photovoltaic solar array (flexible film that conforms to the curvature of the roof)
- Helical wind turbine on roof
- Thermal mass (concrete walls and floors)
- Well water, solar thermal collectors and heat exchanger (can heat or cool water running under the floor)
- Earth tubes
- Recycling showers
- Pervious driveway with 21 percent voids and a water catchment system with a 13,800-gallon cistern (rainwater is used at hose bibs and for flushing toilets)
- LED lighting throughout home
- Repurposed concrete and on-site quartz
- Gray-water system