

JULY-AUGUST 2008

# OREGON HOME

DECOR REMODELING ARCHITECTURE LIFESTYLE

## Lakeside Living

A Lake Oswego cabana grows up

FROM WAREHOUSE  
TO WOW HOUSE

Folk art meets sleek style in the Pearl

\$3.99



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# FROM WAREHOUSE TO




BY DAVID SHARP  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID PAPA ZIAN

*Back to the future: In the '20s, passengers boarded Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway trains at the North Bank Station in a sister-building across the street from the warehouse in which the Del Castelllos live. The couple's loft (opposite) has Portland's first glass-tread staircase. The vault-like door leads to the gallery. (Vintage photograph courtesy of Ed Austin.)*

# WOW HOUSE

*In 1908, a railway built a warehouse in what's now the Pearl District. Nearly 100 years later, Pat and Michael Del Castello call it home.*



**O**n the first Thursday of every month, when dozens of art galleries in Portland's Pearl District open their doors to standing-room-only throngs of connoisseurs from across the city, Pat and Michael Del Castello may be the only art lovers in town able to remain at home and still be in the thick of the action. The reason: Their Pearl District loft is designed to be both residence and commercial art gallery.

More than two years in the making, the loft is the culmination of the couple's passion for art, antiques and collecting. For Michael, the owner of a California-based manufacturing company, the collecting bug bit in childhood, when he started amassing baseball



Those boots are made for walkin' . . . and that's just what they'll do: Pat and Michael Del Castello are at home—with Lucy—in their new stomping ground, Portland's Pearl District.

cards, coins and stamps. Since then, his trove has grown to museum-caliber proportions—encompassing Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley artifacts, art-deco vases, Alberto Vargas watercolors, and a world-class assortment of whirligigs, samplers, cigar-store Indians, and other 19th- and early 20th-century Americana. Along with acquiring art, the Del Castelllos also generate their own: a textile artist, Pat's passions include spinning, weaving, crocheting, knitting, and creating one-of-a-kind sweaters and other custom clothing.

The couple discovered the Pearl District while visiting their adult daughters living in the Portland area. "Every time Michael and I came to Portland, we'd say, 'Gosh, we really like it here,'" says Pat. "There's just a feeling of, 'We're home.'"

During one trip, they noticed a turn-of-the-century brick building originally used as a Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway warehouse. They were immediately charmed by its Theodore-Roosevelt-era architecture. Up for sale, the building had been partitioned into eight unfinished spaces. "We always wanted to live in a warehouse," says Michael. "We wanted a home where, if you stood in the center of the room and turned 360 degrees, you could see everything you had and enjoyed living with, rather than having a conventional home with walls and separate rooms."

No doubt, most prospective buyers who inspected the property assumed it would become either a row of lofts or art galleries. Thinking outside the box, the



Vintage advertising pieces are paired with Architect Lamb designed the lights, which



A hip-cut stainless steel mesh canopy hangs customized for the Del Castelllos' center isle



...ss steel and glass in the Del' Castello kitchen.  
...manufacturer plans on adding to their line.



...e a vintage sign for tea. A Thermador hood was  
...which includes Viking appliances from BASCO.



What a combo: You can catch "Perry Mason" on a flat-screen TV surrounded by a rare  
stash of 100-year-old ceramic Heinz crocks that lines the walkway as you enter the kitchen.



Ee-eye, Ee-eye, Oh! Old Mac'Donald would love this folk art pig that tops the honed granite  
counters in the sleek kitchen that Douglas Green of Kitchens of Distinctions designed.



JACOB SCHACH

MEAT MARKET

NORTH



Pat Del Castello makes like Rapunzel in a glass balcony that's cantilevered from the bedroom over the glass-treaded staircase. The couple mixes up the mood by pairing Michael's folk art with contemporary furnishings. The colorful Luribest rug is from Christiane Millinger Oriental Rugs and Restoration. Architect Jeff Lamb designed the bar stools.

Del Castelllos pondered a much more daring possibility: Why can't it be both? Why indeed. By creating a residence that doubled as a commercial venue for visual arts and antiques, the Del Castelllos would achieve two goals at once: living with the art that they loved while also sharing it with others.

"It's a combination of having this dream in the back of your head that you're going to have this gallery, and also being in downtown Portland, which, to me, is just wonderful," says Pat.

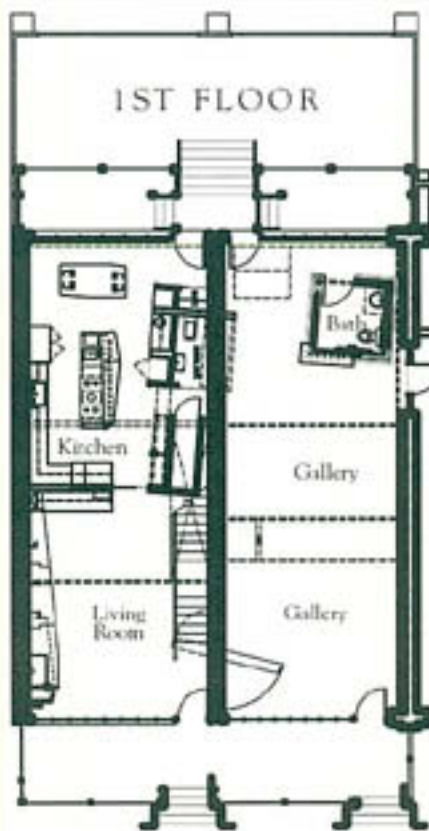
The Del Castelllos bought two adjoining lofts, totaling 4,000 square feet, and commissioned Portland-based architect Jeff Lamb, the principal of Lamb Design Studios, to create a design that would seamlessly knit together the private and public purposes the new owners had in mind. Lamb was ideally suited to the task. For starters, his aesthetic preferences meshed perfectly with those of the Del Castelllos. "My husband had gone through lots and lots of home-design magazines before we started," says Pat. "We pulled out ideas. Then you get Jeff and Michael together, and they just feed off each other."

Modernists at heart, the owners and

architect wanted this art lover's haven to be as much a masterpiece as any painting or antique within it. They envisioned it as a world within a world—a multi-layered celebration of sleek sculptural forms and evocative textures enveloped by the building's Gilded Age charm.

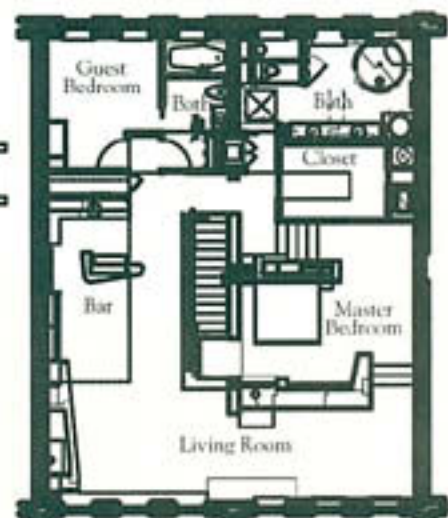
"I really wanted to live with the skeleton of the building—to never cover up what those craftsmen at the turn of the century were building," says Michael. He even salvaged several original iron columns that the building's owner had removed during a recent renovation and hauled away as trash. Reinstalled, their bygone beauty would help tie this modernistic loft to its venerable past. "When you really look at the amount of work that went into each column, the way people built things 100 years ago, when labor was so cheap and quality was so important—you couldn't do it today," says Michael. "Or you could, but you wouldn't want to pay the bill."

Fortunately, part of Lamb's architectural training included a stint in Italy studying the work of renowned architect Carlo Scarpa, a master at integrating contemporary design into medieval buildings. The insights Lamb gained in Italy proved invaluable as he began



## Floorplan

### 2ND FLOOR



## Gilded Age Meets Ultra-Modern

As the Del Castello loft successfully proves, the bygone charm of historic architecture and the sleekness of contemporary design can live happily together at the same address. The trick is knowing how to capitalize on the best of both eras. Portland architect Jeff Lamb shares his thoughts on merging the timely with the timeless:

**Identify the historic gems.** "You have to prioritize what to save, what to keep and what to discard," says Lamb. "On this project, the columns, the wood beams and the brick were so beautiful that they had to become part of the composition."

**Import history.** To integrate the past with the present, use salvage materials to strengthen the home's sense of history. The Del Castello loft, for example, includes several century-old iron columns (*below*) that Michael rescued from the dumpster. Likewise, the wood floors are recycled from a 200-year-old Boston barn.

**Bridge the eras.** Despite obvious stylistic differences, historic and modernistic design both revel in the textures, colors, and inherent strength of honest building materials such as glass, wood and steel. Those materials help merge two styles that might otherwise clash. "We knew from the beginning that we were going to have a lot of wood, because it's warm and it comes in many colors and patterns," says Lamb.

**Build on the past.** By becoming too slavishly historical, you risk turning your house into a period-piece "theme park"—and not a very convincing one, at that. Instead, use contemporary design to honor rather than hide historic features. "We worked with a historic society and convinced them to do some very modern things to the building because our design respected the original warehouse in terms of its honesty of structure and materials and didn't dislocate anything," says Lamb. "It was a continuity that complemented what was here—but was new. I think we did a great job with keeping things raw and simple."

**Have clear goals and a unified team.** "On this project, the contractor, the owners and the architect had a shared vision—and stuck with it," says Lamb. "We had to get a philosophy together as a group, or we couldn't have built it. Every time we made a decision, we thought back to the big picture and asked ourselves: 'Does this work with what we're trying to do?'"

—D.S.

Reflecting the Del Castelllos' cutting-edge sensibilities, Lamb turned every facet of the house—down to its most utilitarian elements—into a study in geometric beauty. For instance, the toll-booth-size glass block sitting in the center of the art gallery may look like a piece of illuminated sculpture. Dubbed The Cube, it's actually the gallery's lavatory. Upstairs, a translucent telephone-booth-size glass tube—nicknamed The Cylinder—is a functioning shower stall made of 300-pound cast glass. Next to it sits The Orb, a water closet whose unfolding, angular shape looks as if it sprang from the hands of an origami master.

sketching the Del Castelllos' future home. "We've taken advantage of every piece of volume in there, and at the same time, we tried to preserve what's great about it—the old bricks, the steel and the wood," says Lamb. "It's like inserting a design within a shell—a careful insertion. We don't crash into the brick and the wood. We always respect it."







Architect Jeff Lamb customized a see-through Heat N' Glo fireplace that's visible from the master bedroom as well as the living room. Eric Franklin of Eric Franklin Woodwork and Design in Portland built the babinga bed, headboard and L-shaped cabinetry, which was engineered with a plasma-TV lift. When the TV is being watched, the model train is obscured.





*"We come into the bathroom one evening and the room was just glowing red," says Pat, in awe of the magic that's created when the setting sun hits the glass window behind the shower, a.k.a. The Cylinder. A toilet and urinal are tucked behind glass walls in The Orb. The sink vessels are from Chosen Hardware in Portland.*



Rail riders prepare to board a Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway train at the North Bank Station—located one street over from the Del Castelllos' current loft—in this 1920s photo.

Inspired by Japanese architecture, Lamb incorporated glass and crimped-metal screens throughout the loft to create a shoji-screenlike layering of spaces. Playfully challenging the preconceived notion that all surfaces need to be perpendicular and plumb, the design includes woodwork panels that intentionally tilt—and edges that zigzag rather than follow a beeline path.

"You'll notice, in most cases, the joints in the granite and woodwork aren't straight; there's always a jog in them," says Michael. "One day Jeff drew something, and I said, 'Oh, man, that's great. What if we notch that?' He loved it. That's kind of what started this idea of putting things together like a puzzle rather than just butting joints together."

In the heart of the home stands—or rather, hovers—a central staircase that cascades with the lightness of a waterfall. Lamb anchored the cantilevered staircase to the adjoining wall so that no part of the structure rests on the floor. As a result, the staircase appears to levitate—an effect enhanced by glass stair treads illuminated by recessed lighting in the floor below. "Because the staircase was so massive and in the center of the space, I wanted to notice it, but I didn't want it to be the focal point of heaviness," says Michael. "I think we pulled it

off." Convincing city building inspectors to sign off on glass stair treads—a Portland first—took more than two years. The tread that finally won approval was one that Michael and his team designed themselves.

Devoid of anything faux, the loft champions the use of honest materials such as glass, richly grained exotic woods, concrete and stainless steel—arranged in interlocking, Euclidean shapes. "No unlike surfaces touch because we wanted to understand each surface," Michael observes. "It might be a paper-thin space, but there's a space."

When juxtaposed, the recurring surfaces produce a symphony of contrasting textures. In the gallery, for example, polished maple panels alternate with rough-surfaced century-old red bricks. "If you look at the space, it's a combination of ultra-smooth and very rough material working together," says Lamb.

With function as much a priority as form, Lamb had to confront the question of how cozy retreat for two could also easily accommodate flocks of art connoisseurs. To keep the two roles from intruding on each other, Lamb designated the entire upstairs as the family's private area—which would encompass a bedroom,

sitting area, and bathrooms for Michael and Pat, plus a generous walk-in closet and guest quarters. "We're living above the store," Michael deadpans.

Lamb then divided the downstairs in two, with half earmarked as a commercial art gallery, and the other half doubling as Pat's private studio and as an occasional venue for charity fundraisers and other large gatherings. In anticipation of catered fetes, Lamb included a commercially equipped kitchen behind Pat's studio space.

Since the door between Pat's studio and the gallery had to function as both entryway and impregnable wall, depending on the occasion, that's in essence what Lamb designed—a bank-vault-



A stenciled number from the left-gallery's railroad warehouse days still fronts the building's facade.

thick, 2-ton travertine-clad portal so modernistic in shape that it could easily be mistaken for an art object on loan from the Portland Art Museum's sculpture garden. When open, the door allows easy access between Pat's studio and the adjoining gallery. When closed, it fits as snugly as a

cello in its case—sealing off the private quarters from the gallery so completely that the casual visitors might easily assume the two spaces belong to different owners. "It's the medieval idea of hidden spaces," says Lamb.

Though motorized, the door is so perfectly balanced that it can also be opened and closed by hand. "It was a prototype, and it had to work the first time, so we had to overkill everything," says Portland-based contractor Don Tinkersley, the owner of Don Tinkersley Construction, who was in charge of executing Lamb's design. "We knew it was going to be a 6,000-pound door, so we set everything to work at 100,000 pounds, so there'd be no way we'd have any failure."

With the possible exception of assembling a space shuttle, it's hard to

SPRING, 1913.

AND  
**OREGON TRUNK RY.**  
**OREGON ELECTRIC RY.**  
**UNITED RAILWAYS.**

# TIME TABLES

W. D. SWINER  
 TRAFFIC MANAGER  
 PORTLAND, ORE.

## They Went By Train!

All aboard! Walking down the Pearl District's tony streets today, you're clueless about how train-wheel-squeekin' a place the area was at the turn of the century. According to *S.P. & S.: The Spokane Portland & Seattle Railway* by Tom Dill and Ed Austin, the 50-foot by 980-foot building that the Del Castellos now partly occupy was filled with toiling trainmen. Not the guys who got their hands dirty. No, if the Del Castellos' walls could talk, the couple would overhear snippets of conversations between railway agents, superintendents, traincar dispatchers and engineers, all working to move railway freight. The sister-building across the street was the one that had passenger facilities until 1922. The vintage shot that opens this story is from that era.

—SALD.



Imagine another construction project packed with more precedents. Indeed, Tankersley and his crew regularly confronted challenges so beyond the bounds of a normal remodel that their role was more that of inventors than builders. "It blows me away what Don accomplished," says Pat. "It makes me think, 'How did one man get all this done?' To me, he's a genius."

Agrees Michael, "If I could afford to leave it to Don when I died, I feel he loves it that much. He'd be honored and so grateful to own it, because he put his heart and soul in it. And every worker I met took great pride in it, too." Because the couple's art collection will evolve, the Del Castelllos and Lamb recognized the importance of factoring flexibility into the design, so the loft

could morph right along with its owners' interests. In the gallery, for instance, crimped-metal screens that descend from the ceiling allow Michael to partition the space into separate areas, depending on the needs of his exhibit. In place of fixed overhead lights, the Del Castelllos opted for track lighting that can easily be repositioned to target specific pieces of artwork. By also installing a Lutron light

## The Look Defined



World-class folk art—think larger-than-life wooden statues of Indian chiefs and soldiers, a wooden molar that hung outside a dentist's office during the last century, cuter-sized shears—contrasts with class, iron and stainless steel in the loft-gallery of Pat and Michael Del Castello.

ing system that coordinates all the lights at once, the couple can instantly and easily change the mood from serene to festive with the push of one button. "The whole space is like that—totally transformable in terms of light, privacy, openness and publicness," says Lamb, who designed the home's art-display areas to accommodate specific sizes of art rather than specific pieces. That way, artwork of similar dimensions could take turns occupying a particular shelf or wall space.

"Most people like to settle into a house and fill it with furnishings," Michael says. "They regard changing things as a disruption. To me, it's what keeps me going. I'm never going to finish; my space will always change." ☐

## meet the PROFESSIONALS



### The Architect:

Jeff Lamb, principal,  
Lamb Design Studios,  
Portland

Years you've practiced  
architecture: 19

Years heading up  
your own firm: 3

Feeling you have when  
you walk through  
what you designed:

"Great satisfaction! Usually after you finish a project, you have, 'what ifs' and 'if onlys' about a couple of rough spots that didn't get smoothed out. On this project, there aren't any rough spots, not a one."

How this project measures up to other residences you've designed: "It was the most intense—and the most rewarding."

Contact info: 503-709-2131

### The Builder:

Don Tankersley, owner, Don Tankersley  
Construction, Portland

Years heading up your own firm: 13

Biggest challenge: "The pivoting door  
between the gallery and the residence. I

had to work directly with the engineers and literally run around to different shops in town to figure out what bearing I needed, what kind of motor, what kind of weight I'd have. It was a lot of figuring out."

Contact info:  
503-232-0918





**Sharp, David. Oregon Home: "From Warehouse to WOW House: Folk art meets sleek style in the Pearl", July - August 2003, p.Cover, 42-57.**

**PROJECT:** Del Castello Loft + Art Gallery  
**CLIENT:** Michael and Pat del Castello  
**LOCATION:** N.W. 11th Avenue @ N.W. Irving 'pedestrian' Street, Pearl District, Portland, Oregon, USA.  
**BUDGET:** \$3,500,000 +/- construction  
**SIZE:** 5,321 sq.ft. [3,344 down / 1,977 up]  
**LEADER:** JEFFREY D. LAMB  
**TEAM:** lamb design studios inc.; kimberley a. shiell; fredrick h. zal, milan b. patel, livia nicolescu, dale t. clifford, kristina n. alg, vrin thomas and sally spencer;

**contractor:** don tankersley + jim tankersley, don tankersley construction [oregon ccb#88663];

**lighting design:** veronika r. batho-demelius, pacific lightworks llc;  
**mech./elec./plumb.:** andy fritchl, interface engineers;  
**structural engineer:** manouch taganeh, associated consultants inc;

**concretework:** eric butler + will carey ;  
**glasswork:** george batho, batho studios;  
**metalwork:** tom ghilarducci + fergus kinnell, ghilarducci studio;  
**stonework:** zanik kel, custom quality tile installation;  
**woodwork:** mark newman + eric franklin, wood craft inc.

**DATE:** 2000-2003

*A mini gallery fills the space between the master bedroom and the street-facing windows on the building's second floor. Throughout the loft, the spaces were designed to display Michael's ever-evolving collections including advertising artifacts, curiosities—like the spire-topped "building" between the chairs that was carved from a single piece of wood—end more!*