



# OUTDOOR 04: Water as Art SPACES

STORY kimberly pryor  
PHOTOS www.nbphoto.com

*year completed:* 2004  
*architect:* MWA, Inc., Kurt Reinkens and  
Kristi Thompson  
*builder:* Moll Construction  
*landscape design:* John Pruyn, ASLA and  
Streamscapes, Scott Cross  
*square footage:* 6,000

THIS ARTIFICIAL STREAM CASCADES BETWEEN DECKS AND PATIOS AND THREE PONDS ON THIS FORESTED LOT (RIGHT). THE MAIN POND NEXT TO THE HOME AND GUEST QUARTERS (LEFT) IS STOCKED WITH FIVE-POUND RAINBOW TROUT.





THE BACK DECK (ABOVE) OFFERS CREEK-SIDE LOUNGING OR A PERFECT PERCH FOR FLYFISHING. THE PONDS AND STREAM (BELOW) ARE MODELED ON SHIRLEY CREEK IN SQUAW VALLEY AND SO SKILLFULLY ASSEMBLED THAT THEY ARE PRACTICALLY INDISCERNIBLE FROM THE REAL THING.



DURING SUMMER, THE SCREENED-IN PORCH OF THE GUEST QUARTERS FILLS WITH THE MUSIC OF THE ADJACENT CREEK (LEFT). THE FRONT OF THE HOME (BELOW) FEATURES A SUMMER-PERFECT FIRE PIT.



**04:** The new Tahoe style of home building is both playful and well-crafted. Both of these are apt descriptions of a residence that our judges recognized for its outstanding outdoor spaces. "Landscape design," said our panel, was too limiting a category to award the home's impressive collection of decks, patios and water gardens.

The team that created this Truckee residence includes architects Kurt Reinkens and Kristi Thompson of MWA, Inc., landscape architect John Pruyn and Scott Cross of Truckee-based Streamscapes. The home's signature water feature begins as a stream near the front door and disappears in a miniature waterfall under a rock bridge built into the house before cascading into a trout pond in the backyard. From there the water streams its way down the hillside of the five-acre property. On a summer night, the stream's soft sounds serve as a lullaby to anyone sleeping in the upstairs master bedroom or in the guest suite, as well as mask noise from nearby Highway 89.

The idea for wrapping this vacation residence around a stream came from

## outdoor spaces

the home's owners. The husband is a fly fisherman who hiked up and down Shirley Creek in Squaw Valley taking photos of stream features he wanted Cross to emulate.

"Scott Cross did an amazing job on the water feature," says Reinkens. "It looks so natural with logs, twigs, sand and different-size stones and pebbles."

The home owner can now cast his line off his back deck and catch one of the 25 five-pound rainbow trout that swim in the upper pond. Cross created steep walls around the area to discourage the fishing habits of bears and raccoons. The trout pond also doubles as a dipping pool with swimmers able to paddle over to an island or dive under it and pop up on the other side through a disguised 30-inch pipe. Three hidden granite steps provide access into the pond. Because the pond and stream are so close to the house, Cross also installed a system to trap any leaking water before it

hits the foundation.


Altogether, the stream flows between three different ponds, each with a separate water treatment system. The upper fishing pond is biologically controlled. Two chemically controlled systems, hidden underneath bridges, sanitize the lower ponds, one of which the owners use as a swimming pool. As a cost-saving measure, the owners can turn on the treatment systems and the pumps by telephone before leaving their primary residence in Stockton.

Cross' contract with the owner allowed him the freedom to work on the project for a few hours, then sit in a hammock and stare at his work for a while. "It's a cliché to say you're not in it for the money," he says, "but this is really my art. I need to have the time to allow the creative process to happen. I'm often pulling things back out that I don't like once they're in there. But if I had a tight time constraint, I might be tempted to leave

them in."

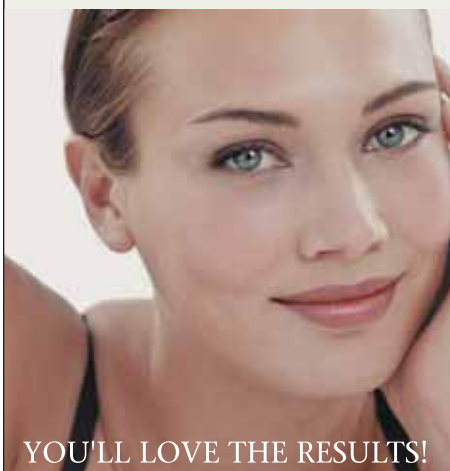
Although the water feature is a focal point of the outdoor spaces, the owners hired John P. Pruyn of L & P DesignWorks, a landscape architecture and planning company in Truckee, to put the finishing touches on the grounds. The builders, Moll Construction, also thinned a minimum amount of trees in the front of the building to open up the views.

"It was great to work with them because it wasn't about lumber — it was about keeping the best trees there," says MWA's Reinkens. "So the home ended up in a park-like setting."

Our judges pointed to the series of patios designed by MWA, and the flow they create between the interior and exterior space, as another impressive achievement. Taken as a whole, this home's wide variety of intimate and usable outdoor spaces creates a refuge that is at once playful, restful and gorgeous. 

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