

ARCHITECTURE / JOSHUA AIDLIN AND PETER LARSEN,
AIDLIN DARLING DESIGN
INTERIOR DESIGN / GARY HUTTON, GARY HUTTON DESIGN
HOME BUILDER / PAUL RYAN, RYAN ASSOCIATES
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / RON LUTSKO JR. AND
ANDREA KOVOL, LUTSKO ASSOCIATES, LANDSCAPE



FREE FORM

A HILLSBOROUGH HOME ENGAGES ITS SITE IN MANNERS BOTH SCULPTURAL AND SUSTAINABLE.

WRITTEN BY LAURA MAUK / PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW MILLMAN



Architects Joshua Aidlin and Peter Larsen designed a LEED Platinum-certified house in Hillsborough with rammed-earth walls and light-filled spaces. For the living area, designer Gary Hutton chose back-to-back sofas by Living Divani from Dzine with a custom limestone-and-bronze coffee table. Leather-covered armchairs by Matteograssi and velvet-upholstered tub chairs by B&B Italia display a rich earthy palette. The painting is by Charley Brown, and the custom rug is by Tai Ping.

When architects Joshua Aidlin and Peter Larsen were approached by a couple to design a home for them and their two teenage sons in Hillsborough, the clients had two requests: that it be LEED Platinum-certified and sculptural. The architects delivered on both counts. "They didn't want a modern box," Aidlin says. "They gave us freedom to experiment with form." Part of that experimentation involved using rammed earth to help create that form. "We like the sustainability and the feeling of permanence that rammed earth provides," says the husband. "We were interested in demonstrating that you can achieve the aesthetic you want and still have a house that performs in an environmentally conscious way."

Galvanized by the request for dynamism, Aidlin and Larsen, both principals with the firm, imagined a house that's at once as light and airy as a pavilion and tied to the very earth around it. "We excavated soil from the site and used it to create 2-foot-thick walls," Aidlin says. "They anchor the house and look like old castle walls." The architects then juxtaposed those earthen walls with great expanses of glass. "The arrival sequence is below grade, where you're buried in earth and concrete, and then as you rise up and make your way to the garden and main living area, the rammed earth joins with the glass walls to give the feeling of there being nothing between you and the garden," says Aidlin. They topped the whole composition with a series of asymmetrical butterfly roofs that are as practical as they're artful. "They're thin and kite-like and float above clerestories that pull in sunlight," Larsen says. "The V-form collects rainwater, directing it to a cistern, and angles the solar panels to collect sunlight." The project's builder, Paul Ryan, whose team included Greg Andreas, Brad Hollis,

Cherner Chair Company bar chairs from Zinc Details pull up to a sculptural counter made with a live-edge elm slab from Arborica in the kitchen. Cabinetry crafted from quarter-sawn walnut complements the coffee-colored stain on the engineered-walnut floors by First, Last & Always.



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In the dining area, a Lindsey Adelman Studio chandelier from The Future Perfect suspends above a black-stained-ash table by Living Divani from Dzine and chairs by Poltrona Frau from Arkitektura. An oil on canvas by Tom Lieber from Dolby Chadwick Gallery hangs on a wall treated with a technique similar to *Shou Sugi Ban*.





Gil McCabe and Dan Wolf, contends that the roof is one of the most remarkable aspects of the design. "Its eccentric geometries don't align with the rectilinear walls, challenging expectations for predictable symmetries," he says.

The architects created the house as a U-shaped structure that wraps around a central courtyard. "The courtyard is the core space that the public rooms revolve around," says Aidlin, noting the open living area, kitchen and dining area stretch across its length. Just off the living area, a vertical concrete tower connects to a tunnel beneath the house, and the architects turned a small perch at its peak into a reading nook. "There's a spiral steel staircase that leads to this private little world at the top," says Aidlin. "But functionally, it provides natural cooling for the whole main wing. The tower begins below grade and grabs coolness from beneath the earth and draws heat up and out of the window at the top."

In appointing the light-filled spaces of the floor plan, designer Gary Hutton arranged modernist low-profile furnishings that speak to both the clients' preferences and the landscape. "The clients wanted a natural palette but they also wanted color," says Hutton, who addressed the family's leanings toward subdued tones and vibrant color by creating an earthy palette with pops of brilliance. In the living area, for example, he grounded the space with "a custom rug with greens and amber by Tai Ping," says the designer, who selected a pair of Living Divani sofas covered with pale pumpkin-colored chenille and leather. "They're placed back-to-back to give a more familial scale to the room." Hutton then brought brighter color into the nearby dining area by surrounding a geometric wood dining table with chairs wearing coral-colored leather. "Only the cushions on the inside are covered in coral," Hutton says. "The backs are dark brown so the color doesn't overwhelm."

Above: Hutton anchored the family room with a custom rug by Tai Ping and a sofa by B&B Italia; two Cassina chairs and the clients' existing ottoman complete the setting. Artwork by Peter Alexander hangs from a rammed-earth wall, and sliding glass doors by Vitrocsa lead outside.

Opposite: In the game room, Hutton chose colorful chairs by Zanotta and paired them with the clients' existing table. A playful rug by Tai Ping grounds the space, while a Studio Italia Design pendant hangs above. Chris French Metal fabricated the cabinets.





Landscape architect Ron Lutsko Jr. and landscape designer Andrea Kovol lined the swimming pool, built by Lifetime Pools, with purple three-awn grasses and devised a network of stone pavers and benches to connect the pool and the house. Hutton placed a coffee table by Ego Paris along with blue furnishings by Paola Lenti from Dzine around the alfresco space. The steel sculpture is by Ivan McLean.

Below, left: A cast-in-place concrete wall lines one side of an interior staircase, which rises from the below-grade arrival foyer. The architects juxtaposed the imposing wall with a sculptural wood screen to create layers of texture.

Below, right: In the powder room, pendants by Bocci lend an ethereal quality to the space and play off a rammed-earth wall—made using soil excavated from the site. The architects designed a concrete counter with an integrated sink, executed by Concreteworks, and paired it with a Brizo faucet.



For one of the son's bedrooms, Hutton selected a geometric Axolight ceiling fixture and a Blu Dot bed, which rests on the owners' colorful rug. The rammed-earth walls here and throughout the structure were executed by Rammed Earth Works.



In the master bedroom, Hutton dressed a B&B Italia bed with a custom cover made with an Armani/Casa fabric. The table lamps are by Flos from Dzine, and Hutton customized the silk-and-wool rug by Tai Ping to match the patchwork drapery fabric by Création Baumann. The acrylic on canvas above the bed is by Robert Kingston from Dolby Chadwick Gallery.

Hutton's most masterful color application, however, is in the master bedroom. "We used the owners' existing upholstered oak bed that's stained gray," the designer says. "I worked from there and found a Création Baumann cotton-sateen fabric for the draperies. It has been cut and sewn back together with bright orange thread, giving it a very sophisticated patchwork design." Mindful of his clients' desire for sustainability, Hutton was drawn to the fabric not only for its aesthetic but also the way it was developed. "The cotton is grown in the United States and processed at a zero-waste factory in Switzerland," he says. "I loved it so much I had the design blown up, with permission, and made into a rug. It's that old-fashioned decorator's trick of matching the carpet to the drapes."

The striking draperies frame the room's large windows and a glass door, which opens to a private courtyard. "I can be in the bedroom and still feel like I'm outside," the husband says. The strong connection between the home and its surrounds was amplified by landscape architect Ron Lutsko Jr. and landscape designer Andrea Kovol. The duo collaborated with the architects on "a series of Cor-Ten steel fin-like walls that extend from the architecture and work with the natural topography," Kovol says. "We then focused on native and Mediterranean plants to reduce water use and arranged them in a linear format along the steel walls."

Altogether, the holistic design fosters a sense of being a part of nature at every turn. "There are about a hundred places inside and outside of this house that you want to stop and settle into," Aidlin says. "You definitely want to hang out here. In fact, it's a place you don't really want to leave." ■