

atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS

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the Roots of RUMMER

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At a holiday party in Donna Root's old neighborhood, she was told she *had* to meet one of the other attendees. Out of all the 60-odd women there, this other person was just like her—she had a job.

At the time, Root and husband Peter Rauch were half-empty nesters, as their son, Marcus, was going off to college, leaving the couple and daughter, Tessa, rattling around a 3,500-square-foot home. That's when the family discovered an alternative to their McMansion and the insular lifestyle it promoted, in a place called Oak Hills.

"We were thinking of downsizing and then realized that these houses existed," says Root about their lifestyle discovery in Beaverton, Ore. "I wanted a Rummer but only wanted one in Oak Hills. Almost daily, on the way to

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The reverse view of the entry atrium from our cover shot, three sliding glass doors open up to the space: the office sits opposite the living room at camera left, while the slate path bisecting the white rock beds on the right leads to the kitchen/dining area. In addition to the IKEA rockers and round area rug, the room is furnished with a daybed from Room & Board and artwork and accents by homeowner Donna Root.

and from work would drive through to check for any For Sale By Owners since there were none listed on the MLS."

One day she saw their Subaru in the distance and figured Rauch was also casing the neighborhood. But it was Marcus, driving through because he badly wanted the family to find a Rummer of their own. With only about 30 modern homes in the postwar tract of 600, Rummert rarely went on the market.

"We heard this house was going up for sale, so we came over and knocked on the front door and asked to see it," Rauch relates. They phoned their realtor and put in an immediate offer, but the seller went with another buyer. Luckily that deal fell through, and in 2004 they were the new owners of a four-bedroom, two-bath ranch built in 1967.

Robert Rummer, now 82, built lots of houses, many of them quite traditional, in and around greater Portland. But it's the modern Eichler cousins that people refer to when they talk about having a "Rummer." He reminisces about meeting A. Quincy Jones and working with





draftsman/architect Toby Moore but doesn't directly answer the Are your homes based on Eichler floor plans? question. He talks about how all of them—developers, architects, draftsmen—were influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's post and beam designs, and how they all borrowed from each other's work. He also tells how his wife, Phyllis, 79, pointed him toward unabashedly modern homes when she fell for an Eichler in the Bay Area. But it wasn't until Bob saw the same Eichler model in *Look* magazine that he understood what she was enthusing over.

The Rauch-Root Rummer had retained its modernist structure, but suffered from handyman-itis. "The house was full of small home improvement projects done without an eye to what was next to it," describes Root, a graphic designer turned corporate brand manager. "We needed to unify the space—visually it drove me insane."

"You could see five different types of flooring from the kitchen," adds Rauch, a former materials scientist. "We didn't intend at first to do as much as we did—it kind of snowballed. The flooring and the painted paneling walls kind of drove that: we'd say, 'We're going this far why would we leave these old toilets—let's just go for it. By the time we were done, it was just studs, concrete and pipes.'"

Skylights and window walls raise the ambient light level in the living room even on a gray day. Homeowner Pete Rauch routed channels for media cables and determined outlet locations before the new linoleum floors and drywall were installed. A vintage Danish modern armchair is teamed with couches from Room & Board, a CB2 coffee table and modular FLOR carpeting. Three IKEA entertainment centers sans their legs line the orange wall, where the original art is by son Marcus Pobloske.

"I'm big into accessible design, so I'll nab a cute new pillow from Target and mix it with custom fabric upholstery and something from IKEA," says Donna Root. "I also shop estate sales for midcentury pieces and I looove IKEA; I think it's really cool that you can get things that are so inexpensive that someone has done a great job designing. I'm almost more impressed by that than by spending a lot of big money."



Once formally divided into a kitchen and family room, the cooking/dining area has some populist features—the stainless steel GE Monogram appliances and track lighting—and some unusual details like the vintage McCoy pottery and riot of throw pillows on the banquette. The aluminum stools are from Crate & Barrel, IKEA dining chairs surround a Room & Board table and overhead is one of the oversize pendants Root specified for the remodel.

Because Root is the primary breadwinner, Rauch was able to work full time on the project from July to November, jumping in to demo, dig a 150' trench for a new electrical service and install things like trim, light fixtures and switches. A personal plus was all the keen tools he needed to perform these tasks: "My record is five times at Home Depot in one day," he laughs.

"I'd say Donna has 70 percent of the design ideas, but our taste is pretty close. I mainly look at it from the constructability, do-ability side: sometimes we'll make a change because it will be easier to do, physically."

Though the couple communicates in shorthand, that wasn't the case with their contractor, Matt Endler. "Multiple times Matt thought I was insane," Root laughs. "I was crystal clear [on what I wanted] and Pete's used to me, but Matt was like, Huh?"

"Take the lights: he thought they looked so cheesy and old—he was all over me, 'Are you sure you want those lights?' But pretty early on he understood that I knew what I wanted and it wasn't that I was dithering

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back and forth," she says.

"We had to bring him along," Rauch adds, "because he'd never done a modern house. He would offer his opinion, but wouldn't push it. But when it was all said and done, he told us, Yeah, you guys did a good job."

One area where Endler's vote prevailed was in the kitchen cabinets. "We didn't think we could afford custom cabinets—it was turning into a money pit—so I did a design on the IKEA online kitchen planner," Root says. "We were going to go up to Seattle and truck them down. But Matt was horrified: he was, like, 'You cannot put IKEA cabinets in this house. I'll get you custom cabinets for the same price.'"

"We wanted to go with walnut," Rauch takes up the

story, "but Matt said you can't use solid wood, you have to use plywood. We went to the lumberyard and started looking at the 3/4" walnut ply. The finished side was very even, flat-grained, old-timey walnut, but the back side had major grain variations and erratic figuring—that's the side we used."

The IKEA layout that Root did formed the basis for Tom Kimlinger's custom work; they only needed to plan some additional drawer layouts and a wrap for the L-shape bottom cupboard. "The man is a god," Root enthuses.

They contemplated a \$10,000 chunk of Corian for the exceptionally deep main counter, but instead used that to surround the sink and went with orange laminate for the



Below: "I picked the color," 12-year-old Tessa says about her blue bedroom furnished largely with IKEA pieces. "I don't like dull colors at all. I collect Japanese erasers that you can take apart and put back together, and paper drink umbrellas, shells, national park badges, magnets." Hanging nine IKEA magnet boards level and evenly spaced was just the kind of challenge Rauch has gotten good at. Right: Tessa's bath is tiled with glass mosaic from Hakatai; the wet room houses the tub and toilet, while the sink is in the hallway nearby.

Opposite: The master bedroom has the only air conditioner in the home, but sliding glass doors and windows make it pleasant all but a handful of 100°-plus days. The neutral linens and Room & Board bed are punched up with colorful pillows and an Eames Hang-It-All on the wall that corrals textiles and purses. Below, right: The master bath also has floor-to-ceiling Hakatai tile and a Roman tub original to the house. A simple Target cabinet provides storage and the floor material is the same slate used in the atrium.





cooktop area. "Laminate is so affordable that if we tire of the color, it's not very expensive to replace; it's like the throw pillow of countertops," Root says.

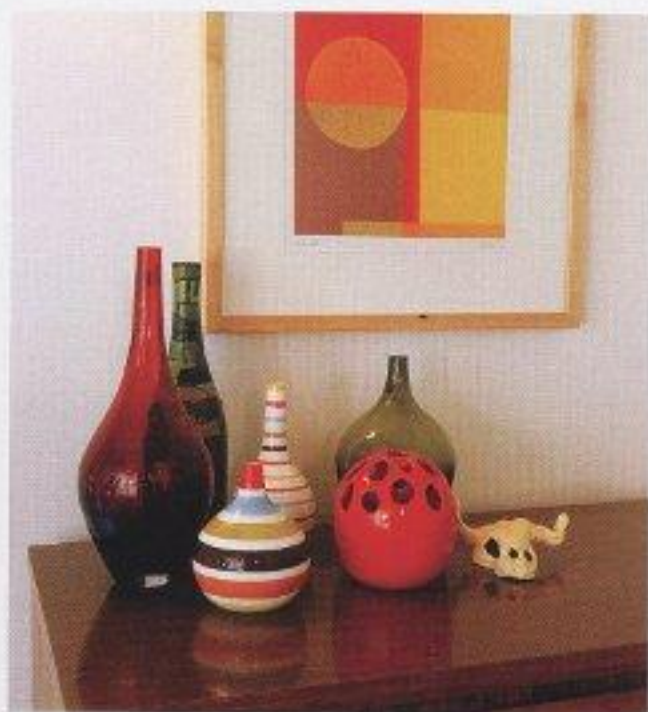
Atomic Ranch first met Mr. and Mrs. Rummer during an Oak Hills home tour, and one wonders how the various renovations they see today sit with them. Bob, in particular, appears to thoroughly enjoy the current attention, and both seem interested in how a new generation is interpreting their homes. Phyllis was always involved in the business and helped choose the original earth-toned color palettes of the houses. Bob notes that men were particularly drawn to his designs, with young doctors and engineers being typical buyers. They were both quick to praise the Root-Rauch remodel.

Two elements that make a Rummer a Rummer are the sunken Roman tub in the master bath, which the couple retained, and fiberglass roofing in the atrium. By the time they bought the house, the atrium had operable skylights instead and that upgrade makes for a split-personality room: it's protected from the rain yet unheated, and the natural airflow in the summer makes all but the hottest days pleasant. The family uses the space as a reading room, entry hall and circulation shortcut.

The punchy orange accents and black floors are among the first details one notices, and they remain some of the couple's favorite aspects. "After five years, I still really love the palette," Root says. "While I was picking the colors I was on a business trip to San Francisco



details



Top left, clockwise: Donna Root is an ardent knitter, and balls of yarn decorate the living room table. A cluster of inexpensive midcentury-inspired vases picked up at various places—from IKEA to a trip to London. The McCoy Pottery collection and abundance of decorative pillows would be more common elements in a bungalow, but they're right at home in the couple's soft-modern interior. Root forages for bargain priced paint-by-numbers "art" at yard sales and vintage shops; these hang in the hallway while others are on the wall just inside the front door.

Opposite: Rauch and Tessa pursuing separate activities just a few feet apart. The paint for the orange walls in the living room and the office was matched to the kitchen laminate. In the former dining room, a wall between it and the kitchen came down during the remodel. The couple would love to upgrade the overstuffed armchairs from their McMansion library with two walnut and white leather Eames lounge chairs. The wrap-around IKEA bookshelves are also due to be replaced with walnut versions to match the kitchen cabinetry.

and went into this '60s vintage waffle house. You walk in and they have orange countertops and walnut accents. It made me happy; it validates some of my choices. The idea was that it still looks like a vintage house but with upgraded surfaces."

When it came to the flooring, they considered everything: cork, wood, slate—the latter would have been Rauch's choice if money allowed. "It was a bit of risk taking," acknowledges Root. "The guy said the only other time he'd laid black sheet linoleum was in Las Vegas. With the dog, you can't really keep it shiny, but if you let go of that, we really like it."

"I was concerned about its durability," Rauch adds, "but it's held up well. At night it disappears and it's really dramatic."

With Oak Hills' bucolic master-planned green space, elementary school, pool, church, RV lot and camaraderie, do they miss their big McMansion? Not a bit. "Kids who grew up here come back to buy homes," says Rauch. "I'd never consider going back to the neighborhood I grew up in, but people here do it regularly. Oak Hills was such a great place for them that they want their kids to experience it, too." 🏠

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Real Estate

