



# MODERN COMPANION

ARTISTS' CONTEMPORARY STUDIO COMPLEMENTS CRAFTSMAN HOME

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SPECIAL TO THE U-T

**N**orth Park, an area that prides itself on arts and culture, seemed a fitting place to set down roots for artists Robert Recht and Melanie Taylor. The couple, who met at the Rhode Island School of Design and spent time in London, bought a 1917 Craftsman home in the neighborhood in May 2013.

The 1,342-square-foot home boasts many design aspects and details that Craftsman homes are loved for, including wood-beamed ceilings in the dining area, built-ins and hutches, and a cozy reading room toward the back of the house. Recht and Taylor have kept those historic

elements intact.

Their 16-year-old son, Wolf, took charge of the front landscaping, painstakingly planting a huge variety of water-wise succulent clippings and two olive trees. The front of the home was painted, without disturbing the climbing wisteria that has cascaded along the front porch long before Recht and Taylor purchased the home. The couple has added some personal and modern details to the old home, such as an ornate dragon-shaped front door handle that Recht picked up in his travels to Kathmandu. Several of their paintings hang on the walls.

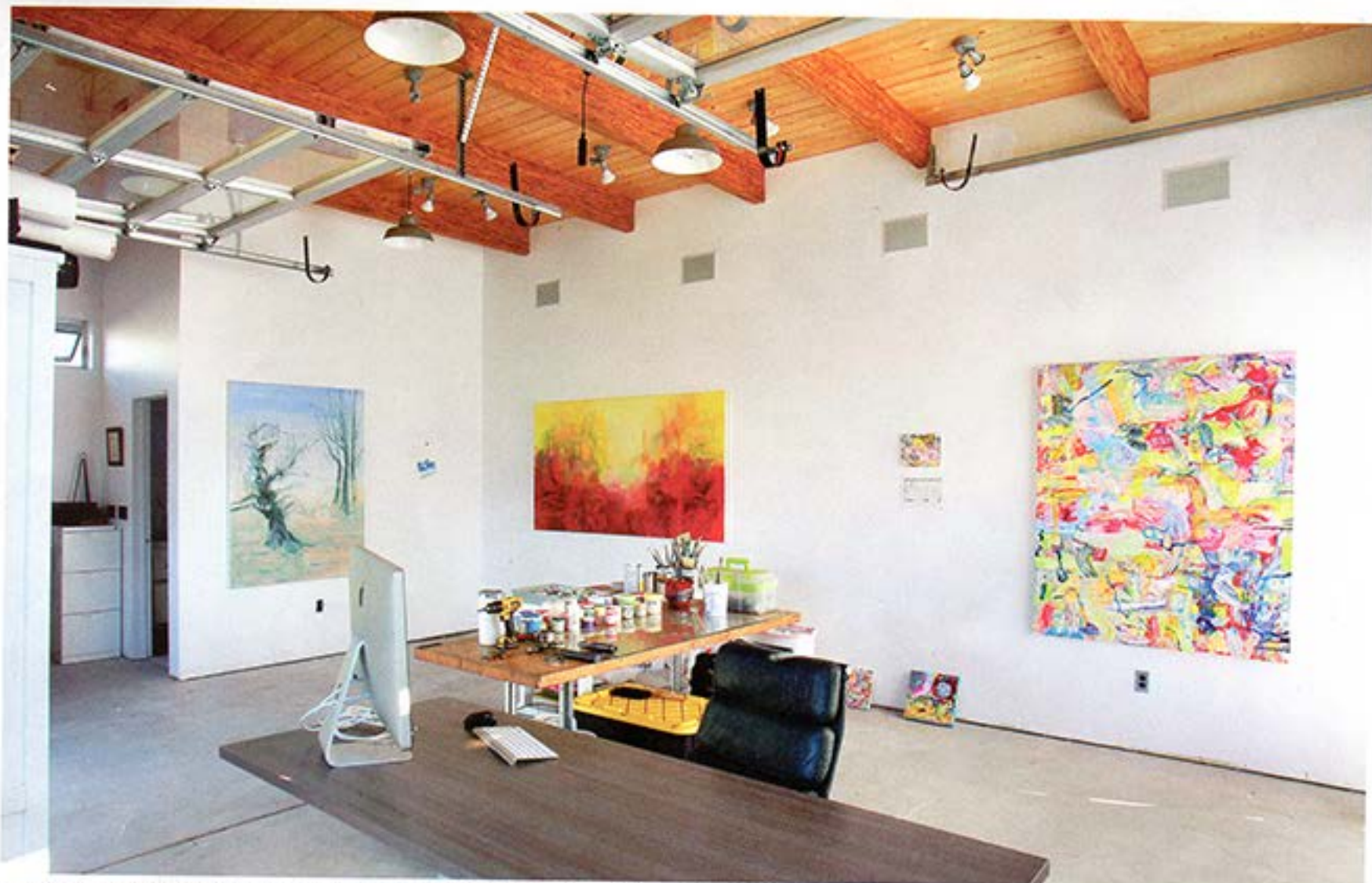
But Recht and Taylor had



Artists Robert Recht and Melanie Taylor built a modern studio behind their 1917 Craftsman home in North Park. Designed by architect Keoni Rosa, the studio is clad with red western cedar wood siding. K.C. ALFRED • U-T photos

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The interior of the studio has the minimalist style of a gallery. The 525-square-foot structure is divided into “his” and “hers” sections, so Recht and Taylor each have a space of their own. K.C. ALFRED • U-T photos

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more in mind when it came to adding a modern, artistic flare to their home. A walk through the reading room into the backyard reveals the couple’s ultra-modern art studio, finished last month and only steps behind the timeworn siding of their Craftsman home.

The 525-square-foot studio, designed by architect Keoni Rosa, is constructed of red western cedar wood siding, with anodized, clear-view aluminum garage doors comprising almost the entire front wall. The doors slide up to the ceiling, creating an open-air feel – a design element found in trendy restaurants and breweries all over the North Park area.

“Though we need a lot of wall space for painting and displaying art, our real priority was creat-



The couple added a modern vibe to the old home without compromising its original features, such as hardwood floors and the built-in cabinets in the dining area.

ing an indoor-outdoor space – so we opted to lose a whole wall to make that happen,” Recht said. The doors are situated so the studio receives northern light – another element that was important to the couple.

When Recht and Taylor first set out to build the studio, they weren’t sure whether it would be better to emulate the Craftsman style of the home; they ultimately decided a radical departure would be best. “If we’d tried to

re-create the style of the main house, we would have just ended up with a pseudo-Craftsman. We wanted something minimal and contemporary, and we knew if we did something so different, we wouldn’t just be trying to make a copy of something. Rather, we’d be creating a structure relevant to today, and creating something that will someday have its own history,” Recht said.

Recht and his son built much of the structure together, including covering the inside walls with plywood substrate so they could handle heavy paintings, laying the drywall interior, putting up the exterior siding, installing the electrical fixtures, laying the brick patio and planting the landscaping. (Rosa brought over a trashcan full of succulent clippings from his own yard, in addition to several citrus trees and two California Pepper trees.)

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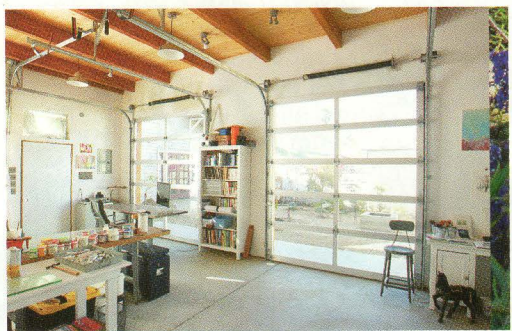
Still, despite the modernity of the studio, the warmth of the wood siding complements the elements of the main house, as does the recycled brick they used to pave the backyard and the fire pit piled high with wood and branches.

The interior of the studio – with clean, white walls, square lines and high ceilings – is “inspired by minimal gallery spaces,” Taylor said. The space is divided into “his” and “hers” sections, so Recht and Taylor have their own working area. The couple also added a bathroom to the studio and an outdoor shower to the patio, giving the family a whole new element of space and enlarging their living area. (The main house has only one bathroom for the family of four, which includes 12-year-old Lucy.)

Taylor calls her painting style “on the threshold of abstraction and landscape.” Recht’s style is abstract.

“Having a studio at the house is such a treat and a timesaver – we don’t have to plan to paint,” Taylor said. “We can just pop out and do it.”

Samantha Bey is a San Diego freelance writer.



**The couple’s 16-year-old son, Wolf, landscaped the front of the home with water-wise plants and helped build the studio, which has clear garage doors to flood the space with light. K.C. ALFRED • U-T photos**