

Architecture deals with inside as well as outside



STEVEN SIVAK

Two months ago, I began reporting on the progress of a private home being constructed, and I will continue to have monthly updates on the project progress. Since last week was dedicated to this new role that I am assuming of architect/builder, I thought I would spend another week looking at some of the decisions that have been made regarding finishes and details.

As you may remember, the exterior is redwood tongue-and-groove siding with a clear finish. Windows are custom-made redwood casings, casements and fixed units.

Going along with the redwood scheme, the exterior doors are either redwood slabs or at more significant areas, redwood rail-and-stile with large single lights of glass. Interior doors will be cherry stained to match the redwood - why, you ask, not use redwood interior doors? The answer is simple: cost. In addition, all base trim will also be cherry, as will the main stair and the one-half-story stair to the Listening Room.

Kitchen cabinets will also be cherry. Countertops throughout the house will be a cast epoxy product that is about ten times harder than Corian. It looks like smooth black slate and is nearly indestructible. Believe it or not, it is about half the cost of Corian.

The main public areas of the house will be covered in cork tile, which will be protected with

polyurethane. The cork is light golden color and is extremely comfortable under foot and has great acoustic properties. Treated with respect, this material will last 40-50 years and will provide much comfort. Other floor materials that are being planned for the house include Pirelli rubber tile in the laundry and pantry and a commercial closed-loop carpet in all sleeping areas and the Listening Room.

Lighting has been specified and is relatively modern and sleek. It seems that the Italians have the market on elegant light fixtures, and the sources for such fixtures are relatively limited. Pricing is high, but if they are selected carefully, I believe that light fixtures have a tremendous effect on a space and are worth the cost.

The second floor of this house,

due to its relative insignificance, is left very few high-end fixtures, and the majority of these beauties are found in the public areas of the first floor.

There are sconces, surface-mounted fixtures, recessed and semi-recessed fixtures, indirect strip lights, pendants and probably some others as well.

Equally as important is the manner in which the switching is controlled. The use of three-way legs is important in allowing one to move through the house without having to double back in order to turn off a light.

One of my favorite tricks is to three-way a half-hot receptacle at the bedside and have the other leg of the three-way be a switch at the bedside. This allows one to turn off a reading

light with a switch and not have to remember to turn it back off again in order to switch it on when entering the room.

This house will also have a light that lights up the route to the bathroom and is controllable from the bedside.

Due to its quasi-rural setting, the home will also be a motion detector on the drive, which sounds the doorbell when someone drives up! This was the client's idea, and I really can not take credit for such a great idea.

So the major colors and materials for the house are redwood/cherry, cork, steel troweled concrete for the walks, Benjamin Moore Super White for the interior and exterior painted surfaces, lead-coated copper gravel stops and flashing and concrete-

colored brick for the fireplace and freestanding courtyard walls.

Kitchen appliances and bath fixtures are white - white never goes out of style and is always refreshing to look at. All natural materials were selected because of their low maintenance and deep long-lasting beauty.

This is a house that will look good in 30 years and will be around for a long time to come.

Steve Sivak is a licensed architect in private practice and an adjunct professor of architecture at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield. He specializes in well-crafted residential and commercial architecture and can be contacted at (313) 769-8502.

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