



Artful Abode

Western Home Acts as Living Gallery

By Colleen Seto



From the moment you cross the threshold of the 10-foot-tall front door with its massive metal knocker, you're hit with the grand scale of Paul and Kristin Van Ginkel's home. And yet, it exudes a warmth that makes you feel instantly welcome.

This is because of the Van Ginkels themselves, who designed, built and decorated the home from the ground up. Back in 2003, Kristin, now a retired architect, drew a sketch of their dream home on a napkin, and before they knew it, they had bought a lot on the western edge of Calgary with a stunning view of the Rockies.

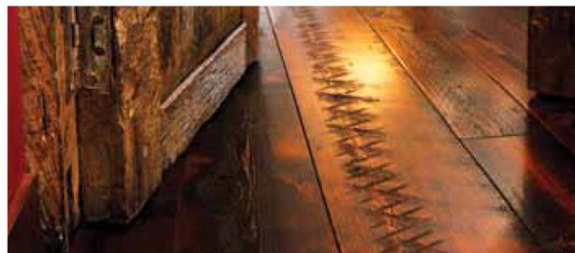
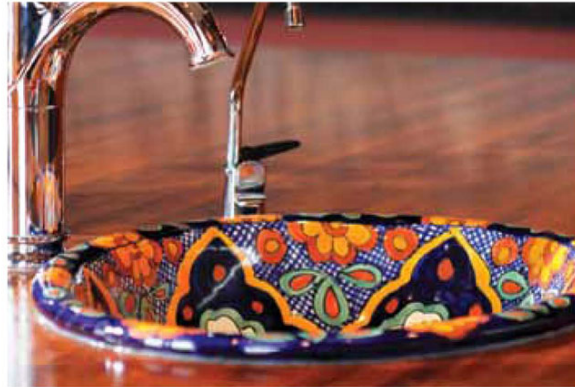
The couple headed down to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, got married, and shopped for their yet-to-be-built home. "With Kristin's genius, she knew what we needed," recalls Paul of their February 2004 trip. They filled a 55-foot container full of doors, cabinets, furniture, sinks, 44 light fixtures, and more, and had it trucked back to Calgary.

PHOTOS BY JASON DZIVER

They broke ground in April 2005 and after a whirlwind 13 months, moved into their new home. And what a home it is. Designed to showcase Paul's paintings—he's a contemporary, representational artist specializing in Western themes—the home is built for work and play. The aptly named great room is where they host art exhibitions for over 100 people.

"We celebrate wood," says Paul, and the great room is proof-positive. The floor is reclaimed barn wood and the ceiling boasts wooden rafter beams they refer to as "the spine of the house." Finding new life is the fireplace mantle, a wonderfully weathered piece of wood they rescued from a Mexican dump. There are four sets of colossal Mesquite wood doors, which add to the rustic charm of the home. "We really wanted the knots and wear of the wood to be exposed," explains Paul. The reclaimed wood gives Casa Van Ginkel a strong Western character.

The lower level is Paul's domain playing host to his art studio, a art gallery, his office and an art storage room. "It's great working at home," he affirms. "My five-year-old daughter Isabella walks me to work every morning!" The studio is a haven of inspiration with one wall featuring floor-to-ceiling windows, one with a custom-made easel and another with a retrospective of his career including a drawing of Donald Duck he did when he was 13. "It reminds me of what I've done and where I come from."



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HOMES OF THE WEST

A framed 2007 Calgary Stampede poster of Paul's making swathes the office wall. The iconic cowboy painting is the first of its kind; prior to that, Stampede posters were graphic montages. "It's universally understood that painting the annual poster is the pinnacle of Western art," he says. "I remain proud of my piece and also honoured that I was the first artist to create a fine art painting for the annual poster."

Moving through the home, every room functions as a mini gallery with Paul's artwork intermingling with the décor. The Van Ginkels are collectors at heart and their home displays their compilations of crosses, masks, fans and an array of Western artifacts including saddles, longhorn skulls, and horseshoes, which are thoughtfully sprinkled throughout the home.

Despite all of the artifacts—some very valuable—the Van Ginkels aren't fussy about anything, keeping the house comfy and lived-in. "We don't freak out about stuff," affirms Paul. "Just come in, keep your shoes on, and make yourself at home." And that's what makes this house a home. ❖C

As a freelance editor and writer, Colleen Seto pounds out prose for the likes of *Avenue, up!*, *CanadianLiving.com* and *National Geographic Books*. colleenseto.blogspot.com, @setoc on Twitter

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