



Two minds come together to create
one stunning sculptural home.

By Catherine Warmerdam

man of STEEL



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The home's exterior "has no ornamentation at all," explains architect Jim Bob Kaufmann, "just texture built into the materials, so that it can act as a backdrop to the things around it."

Artist Gerald Walburg has enjoyed a storied career crafting large-scale minimalist sculptures out of corten steel and other metals, so it's surprising that art wasn't his first calling. "Architecture would have been my first desire after high school," Walburg laments, "but I wasn't a genius in math, and in those days you needed to be very strong in math to be an architect."

Still, that didn't stop Walburg from dabbling in the field. "I've designed almost a dozen buildings, mostly for myself," he says, including the home he shares with his wife, Deborah, in East Sacramento. It's part of a small live-work compound that Walburg has erected over the course of a 25-year on-and-off collaboration with Sacramento architect Jim Bob Kaufmann.

As a young man, Walburg was employed as a draftsman for engineering and architectural firms, rendering detailed drawings using little more than pencil, paper and analog drafting tools. It's the same way he works with Kaufmann today. "I don't know CAD, so I lean over a drafting table with a T-square and triangles. I do the whole plan on paper, then I give it to Jim Bob and he puts it in a computer."



"I never think about whether an art piece is going to go here or there. I move things around so I never get tired of them."

—Gerald Walburg

LEFT: The shadows and reflections created by a zig-zagging sculpture near a corner window make for a playful display.





ABOVE: The kitchen and dining area are situated on the home's ground floor. "Deborah is a big cook, and this is the heart of the home," says Kaufmann. Simple finishes—flat-front cabinets, quartz countertops—don't compete with the bold art and midcentury furniture.



FAR LEFT: The cantilevered upper floor, an element insisted upon by homeowner Gerald Walburg, is a feat of engineering. A sculptural post designed by Walburg "holds up one-fourth of the upstairs," says Kaufmann. "It's a really cool feature of the house."



LEFT: It was Walburg's idea to create a sunken garden area adjacent to the basement—an ingenious way of inviting light into the subterranean space.

“As soon as you step inside the gates of the compound, you’re in another world. The gardens, which Jerry designed, are set up with different textures, colors and heights, with sculptures in the middle of it all so that the elements play off of one another.”

—Jim Bob Kaufmann



BELOW: The living room, situated on the home's top floor, is decorated with rich colors against a neutral backdrop. “Jerry has an incredible eye for color and pattern,” says Kaufmann.





ABOVE: The sculpture in the basement is so large that it had to be installed and wrapped in plastic before construction was completed.

The layout is just one part of a months-long conversation between two creatives in which they question and challenge one another's ideas as they puzzle through design solutions. "Our personalities mesh well enough that I'm willing to look at what his ideas are and try to put them into a form that we can actually build," says Kaufmann. "That's no easy task; he does have some wild ideas sometimes. But it's a fun challenge because it's never like a normal building. He's a very creative, very outside-the-box thinker. My job is to work with structural engineers and electrical engineers and the city to get the thing built."

Walburg's home is both a showcase for and an example of the monumental sculptures for which he's known. "Jerry treats this as another piece of artwork," explains Kaufmann. Clad in corten steel and capped with a painted steel shed roof, the structure is sculptural in form, with bold angles jutting skyward and a cantilevered section suspended artfully, almost magically, over the lush grounds, shading the patio below. "It's an engineering marvel," says Kaufmann of the cantilever.

Inside, the line between residence and gallery is intentionally blurred. Walburg's collection of sculptures, paintings and iconic midcentury-modern furniture is showcased prominently, but the space doesn't feel cavernous or antiseptic the way many art galleries do, thanks to Kaufmann's adept approach to scale. "There's a purposeful layering of lines throughout the house that help create a human scale," he says. Color—in the paintings, the area rugs and the furnishings—is also "key to keeping it human," adds Kaufmann.

Walburg says that he creates art to please himself, and this house is no different. The home is a monument to his ethos. As for Kaufmann, "I appreciate and enjoy the opportunity to work with someone who has an artistic vision. It elevates my work and it elevates his work. The whole beauty of this thing is the collaboration of two creative minds trying to achieve this really unusual and special building and environment." 🏡