

Western Romance in California

THE AMERICAN FRONTIER INSPIRES
A HOUSE IN HORSE COUNTRY

Architecture by Geoff Sumich Design

Text by Jeffrey Simpson

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He gave me amazing metaphors for how he wanted this house to look," Southern California architect Geoff Sumich says of his client Bruce Goldreyer. "He wanted the house to look like a cross between a Spanish mission and a cliff dwelling."

The B & B Ranch that Sumich created for Goldreyer and his wife, Barbara, constructed of poured concrete and local orange granite, is located on the upland Santa Rosa Plateau, about 75 miles north of San Diego. Two nearby nature preserves allow pedestrian and equestrian traffic but may not be developed. This is horse country, where many of the residents breed and train their own steeds.

"We wanted to be at one with nature when I retired," explains Goldreyer, who was a cardiac electrophysiologist and who now breeds Missouri fox trotters. "We wanted this house to be something growing out of the rocks and the mountain." Sumich also had in mind "the imagery of an American frontier fort with several buildings protected by a wall around the enclosure."

With all of these Western precedents, there was one essential stipulation: The house had to be fireproof. "This area is often swept over by wildfires," says Sumich, "and the nearest fire station is far away."

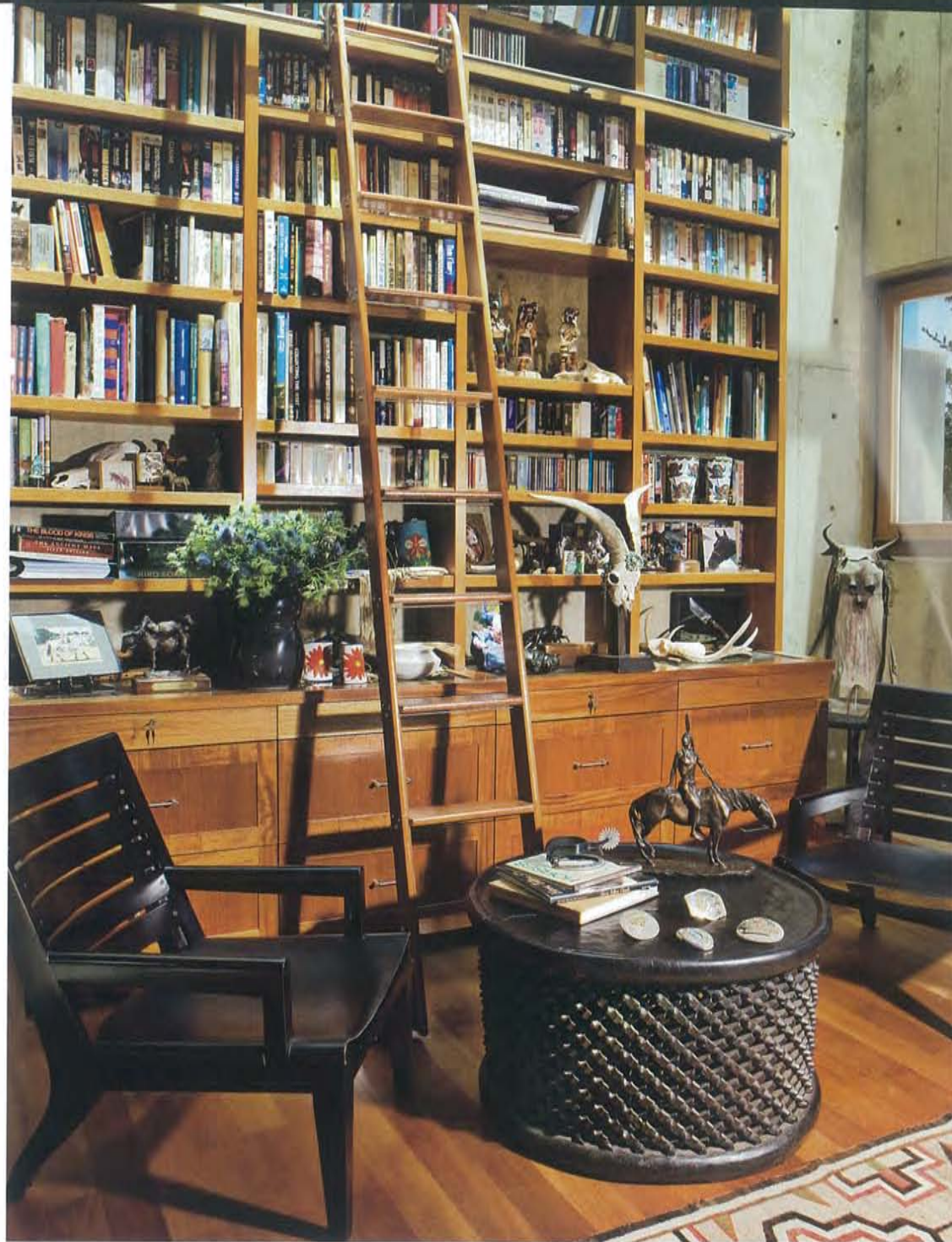
The idea for the project started more than 20 years ago when Goldreyer would camp on the land with his horses before there were any buildings at all. After Sumich was recommended to him—and following many conversations—they began what is now the one-room guesthouse on the property. "This was an experiment," says Goldreyer. "There was a bed, a bathroom, and we cooked in the fireplace."

Sumich has a vivid memory of the romance of that life. "It was built to keep the elements and the wildlife, like mountain

"Our objective was to make a modern-day cowboy house based on Spanish haciendas," architect Geoff Sumich says of B & B Ranch, a 4,000-square-foot residence and guesthouse he designed for Bruce and Barbara Goldreyer in Murrieta, California. **LEFT:** Glenna Goodacre's bronze *Spotted Tail Goes to Washington* is in the entrance hall. **TOP LEFT:** The couple's horses Gold and Star at the hitching post in the entrance court. **OPPOSITE:** The great room.







OPPOSITE: The ironwood table and chairs decorate the great room's dining area. *Dogger*, by Elliott Puckette, hangs on the concrete column. The stairs lead to the library, which is suspended above the kitchen. Range, ovens and wine refrigerator, VikingRange.com.

RIGHT: An African drum table, topped by a 1904 bronze by Charles H. Humphriss, and armchairs by Christian Liaigre for Holly Hunt are grouped before the bookshelves in the library. At right is an Apache "Antelope" dance mask. The Eye Dazzler rug is Navajo.

lions, out. One rainy day not too long after the guesthouse was completed, I stopped by. The Goldreyers had been riding horses. There was a big piece of meat cooking in the fireplace. Bruce took his bowie knife and sliced off some pieces for sandwiches. I thought, This is the way a house on this property is supposed to work—the outdoors brought inside."

"When we decided to expand—to live here and make this our permanent home—we wanted to replicate what we had with the cottage on a larger scale," adds Goldreyer. "We basically still wanted one big room."

The great room, which defines the core of the main house, has a roof 53 feet long. This posed a problem for support because a center beam would have been impossibly long and heavy. Sumich installed a type of truss used in medieval architecture, to which the roof beams are attached while leaving the center peak of the

roof open. This allowed him to fill the open peak with glass, creating a skylight that floods the space with all the permutations of sunlight and clouds as they move across the plateau.

With the poured-concrete frame, the house is admittedly massive. "We had to go down 15 feet to get to bedrock that the geologists thought could support the weight of the house," explains Sumich. But there is also a lightness to the interior. Bruce Goldreyer's library literally hangs above the kitchen at the dining end of the great room. "The concrete walls of the great room are two bookends," says Sumich.

Sumich credits the builder Mark Stodder for executing his unique design. "He made our crazy ideas possible." Stodder and Sumich used local resources, including the orange granite that lay about all over the site, wherever possible. And he hired the area's artisans, who rode their horses to work and employed

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methods that have been used for millennia. “They would sit on the ground with two pieces of orange granite, rubbing them together, using one to shape the other,” recalls Sumich.

The Goldreyers’ extensive Southwestern art collection includes a bronze by Charles H. Humphriss, a contemporary of Charles Marion Russell’s, and a sculpture of the Sioux chief Spotted Tail by Glenna Goodacre, who designed the portrait on the Sacagawea dollar and the Vietnam Women’s Memorial. They collect Navajo blankets, some of which date to before 1880 and were woven with vegetable-dyed yarns. A Germantown Eye Dazzler from the late 19th century—so-called because the wool came from Germantown, Pennsylvania—decorates the library. Eye Dazzlers were woven in the brilliant colors produced by aniline dyes for the commercial market.

The art-filled B & B Ranch is surrounded by layers of geological, botanic, animal and human development. “My favorite time of day here,” says Bruce Goldreyer, “is 5:00 A.M. in the summer. I sit on the terrace with my cup of coffee, and the sun comes up and shines on the slope of the mountains. They turn yellow-orange. The rocks are like a fireplace. Then the wildlife comes out. There are coyotes—that is when they hunt. And the owls talk to each other.” □

ABOVE: A 1930s Navajo rug covers the bed in the guesthouse. “The owners have fond memories of cooking meals in the fireplace and enjoying the coziness of the small house,” Sumich says. **RIGHT:** Sam, an Australian shepherd, watches over the lap pool. Elizabeth Leland designed the B & B Ranch landscaping. The circular sculpture is by Bill Worrell. Sutherland seating.



