

# ca

## HOME+DESIGN

# star- power style

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**2012 CH+D  
Awards**

And the  
winners are...

**Find  
Yourself**

Discover  
your design  
identity

This knockout West  
Hollywood kitchen  
by designer Jeff  
Andrews floored  
the competition in  
this year's CH+D  
Awards, p. 104.



# RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE

(LESS THAN 3,000 SQ. FT.)



**Jonathan Feldman**  
Feldman Architecture, San Francisco  
**CATERPILLAR HOUSE**

**W**hen a new client walked into the office of Jonathan Feldman and told him she wanted his firm to design a modern-day ranch house for her property in Carmel Valley, the architect's heart sank. He was, after all, working on two projects in which he was "de-ranchifying" the long, low and famously dark houses. But his client took her inspiration from a different kind of ranch house: the originals designed by Cliff May, the architect who invented the form. (Later, bastardized versions were more akin to low-slung tract housing than light-filled Case

Study dwellings.) "She had lived in a May house, and wanted to have that experience again," says Feldman.

To design and build what came to be known as the Caterpillar House, named for the way the segmented structure curves to form a gentle S on the site, Feldman had to do his homework on the famed midcentury designer. "I was aware of May and some of his more famous houses, but I had a whole lot more to learn," he says. "His ideas of low and horizontal massing, open plans with a strong connection to the outdoors and main living areas that center informally on the kitchen became our manifesto for the project."

JOE FLETCHER



### On Display

The Caterpillar House seems to rise out of the grassy landscape as a naturally occurring formation (opposite page). Because the generous views of the surrounding hills provide plenty to look at, Jonathan Feldman designed a slatted display wall that's there but not there.



**Back to the Future**

The home's interiors were designed by Jay Jeffers (another CH+D Award winner, p. 84) in a midcentury style reminiscent of the era in which the ranch house was born. The earthy palette is a good fit for the surrounding Santa Lucia landscape, which is visible from all points in the house.

Like the homes that inspired it, the Caterpillar House has a meandering, single-story layout, but unlike many of those 1950s-era homes, its roof isn't gabled or outfitted with extra-deep eaves. In fact, it's just the opposite: The shed roof (modified with a slight curve in the fascia at the highest point to mimic the home's undulation) tilts up toward the sun, defying the traditional ranch house's reputation for gloomy interiors.

However, the indoor-outdoor connection for which the ranch houses of yesteryear were renowned is alive and well in this 2,700-square-foot home. The threshold between inside and outside is nearly invisible, thanks to large floor-to-ceiling windows and sliding glass doors, and the patios seem to taper and then fade into the natural grassy landscape, which is part of the Santa Lucia Preserve. "The site is so beautiful that we wanted the house to be as connected to the land as possible," says Feldman.

Although Feldman was no stranger to sustainable design, this house took his awareness to new levels. It became the first custom home on the Central Coast to be LEED Platinum certified: It is heated and cooled by a passive solar system, its landscape is fed by rainwater gathered in three large collection tanks and it has solid walls made from rammed earth, which was gathered during the excavation phase of construction. "The client wanted the house to be an inspiration for how to build green," he says. "If it meant building smaller, spending a bit more or navigating some extra paperwork, she was more than willing to put up with it."

So would May, a man who was as passionate as he was prolific, appreciate Feldman's creation? "Designers working in the '50s and '60s did not have the materials or technical knowledge we have today," says Feldman. "I like to think that if May were working right now, he might create something like this house." —*Mary Jo Bowling*

JOE FLETCHER

"I like to think that if May were working right now, he might create something like this house."



**Made with May in Mind**

ABOVE: The edges of the roof undulate to follow the caterpillar-like curves of the house and driveway. LEFT: The concept of the sliding glass door, a key ingredient in Cliff May's original houses, is blown up and expanded in this modern-day version. In the dining room, the doors slide back to make meals instantly alfresco.



**Lay of the Land**

The ceiling is made up of small segments of Douglas fir flooring, which allow it to bend and follow the shape of the house.



**Green Acres**

ABOVE: Feldman strove to keep the house in harmony with the striking surroundings of the Santa Lucia Preserve; the interiors seem to dissolve into the grasses beyond. LEFT: The rainwater-collection tanks provide all of the landscape irrigation and have allowed the homeowner to water young plants even during periods of irrigation restriction.

JOE FLETCHER