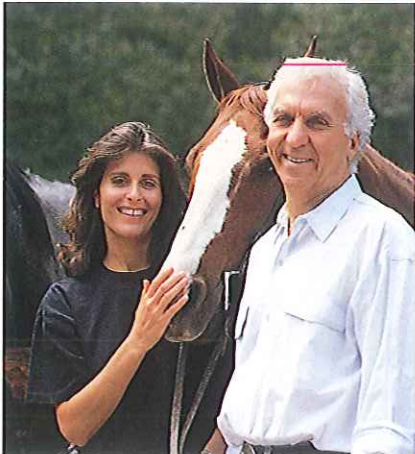


WESTERN SPIRIT AT THE LAZY A RANCH

THEA AND MERV ADELSON'S EQUINE GUESTHOUSE OUTSIDE ASPEN

ARCHITECTURE BY BILL POSS, AIA
INTERIOR DESIGN BY ZOE MURPHY COMPTON
TEXT BY GAEL GREENE PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE MARLOW



Film producer Merv Adelson and his wife, Thea (above), worked with architect Bill Poss and designer Zoe Murphy Compton to create a barn for their Lazy A Ranch. A three-bedroom apartment serves as guest quarters over the stable and tack room.

"I wanted to convey a sense of Aspen's too-often-forgotten western history using materials and motifs that remind us of where we started," says Zoe Compton (above). "And it's important to me that, whenever possible, I use local craftsmen and artisans."

Given a fax and a modem and an 800 number, why should anyone who loves horses be tied to an urban boardroom? As film producer Merv Adelson and his attorney wife, Thea, were drawn deeper into the outdoor life of their ranch outside Aspen, lingering away from home base in Los Angeles, the modest vacation house at the heart of Adelson's Lazy A Ranch had come to seem confining. A burgeoning interest in a variety of rodeo sports, the purchase of new horses, and their growing menagerie also

made an ordinary barn impractical.

While architect Bill Poss was completing plans for a new barn, Adelson decided that the loft over the stables could provide a private retreat for his grown children and their families and for commuting business associates. As quarters for visiting foreign dignitaries, it would be a taste of the cowboy tradition. That's when he called in designer Zoe Murphy Compton, a tall, folksy Texan with a passion for vintage Americana. What Tammy Wyanette is to country soul, Compton in

RIGHT: A Navajo rug from the 1930s leads into the living area, where an antler bench rests beneath a pine sofa table topped with rusted-iron cactus lamps. Straw mixed with plaster lends texture to the walls of the entrance hall, where copper sconces complement the western-motif iron chandelier. At right are a pair of 1920s skookum dolls displayed on an Austrian carpenter's bench.



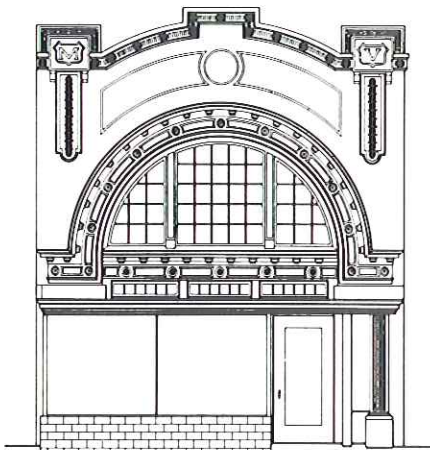
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IMPERIAL RETREAT

A REPLICA OF KYOTO'S ELEVENTH-CENTURY PALACE IN UPSTATE NEW YORK
continued from page 140

the world will be brought together to explore ways of improving life for future generations. To that end, preliminary designs for a center have been drawn up by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; it will be built at a discreet distance from the palace and gardens, but they will be available to participants in seminars and other professional gatherings. "Who could imagine a better place in which to meditate?" Ikeda asks, as he conducts a visitor through the grounds. "Here one has stepped out of the hurly-burly of the everyday world and into the world of thought."

It is true that one feels an uncanny sense of being carried far back in time and place in the course of even a brief stay at Sho-Fu-Den. Telltale signs of the neglect of the many precious materials employed in its construction—rare woods, fabrics and stone sculptures—add a note of poignancy to the sheer unexpectedness of the presence of an ancient-seeming Japanese pavilion in a wilderness only a couple of hours by car from New York City. At the moment, streams that used to run through channels down to ornamental ponds are dry, and the ponds themselves have lost their definition; from the sedgy shore of the largest of them, the supports of a long-vanished teahouse can be discerned beneath the glassy surface of the water.

The two large ceremonial rooms of the main building, along with many of their original furnishings, have survived in far better condition than the grounds. It is easy for us to imagine Dr. Takamine entertaining distinguished guests in them, and the American families that followed him evidently found no difficulty in adapting the traditional formality of Japanese design to the casual practices of a Catskills summer holiday.

The fact is that for several generations now American architects have been incorporating Japanese motifs into their architecture, and especially into the architecture of summer places. With good reason, for the inti-

mate relationship between interior and exterior in Japanese design—the ready access in one-story structures between house and garden by means of sliding panels, whether of wood or other materials—is a much-sought-after feature of contemporary American houses. And the imitation of Japanese design in this and other respects goes back at least as far as the Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia in 1876, where the Japanese exhibits launched a national vogue for designs in the Japanese style. One thinks of such buildings as the Newport Casino by McKim, Mead & White, built in 1879, and of the great camps of the Adirondacks of a slightly later period, their timbered roofs decorated with Japanese parasols, their floors covered with tatami. The vogue was reinforced by Japanese exhibits at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and, as we have seen, by the exhibits at the St. Louis World's Fair.

Frank Lloyd Wright was designing a pretty cottage in the Japanese style on the outskirts of Chicago as early as 1900, and having visited the exhibits at St. Louis in 1904, he was inspired to pay the first of his many visits to Japan the following year. In truth, what Wright called his Prairie houses have far less to do with prairies than with Japanese temple and domestic architecture. For that reason, to stand on the lofty front porch of Sho-Fu-Den is to feel oneself in the presence not only of the sunny ghost of Dr. Takamine but also in that of Wright and the host of architects who shared his adventurous spirit—among them, Welles Bosworth, George Howe and William Wilson Wurster—and were happy to borrow principles of design and construction from a culture seemingly so distant and so much at odds with their own. □

Sho-Fu-Den is open to the public by arrangement with the Japanese Heritage Foundation Inc., 401 Fifth Avenue, Second Floor, New York, New York 10016; 212/213-0640.



ABOVE: In the tack room, beadboard walls with log-and-chink wainscoting are topped by a corrugated-tin ceiling. A western print hangs near a tramp-art hat rack made from shed antlers that Compton found in Texas.

"It's unique to have a horse operation so close to living quarters," says Poss. RIGHT: The working horse barn has rusted-iron doors leading to each stall. The horses are, from left, Baboon Bar, Crystal and Scorpio.

"I don't know many barns with oak wainscoting," says Compton. "I hope the horses appreciate this."





LEFT: In the powder room, an adage-painted mirror is mounted above a handmade cabinet with original wood countertop and a hammered-copper sink. Reflected in the glass are a movie still from the 1930s and a scone accented with a horseshoe and spurs.

ing the mason jar sconces, horseshoes forged into andirons and forming the armature of one master bed. "We pestered all the farriers and ranchers for miles around for their old horseshoes to do this job," she says.

"You'll sleep over the horses," the Adelsons like to tell guests, enjoying the dubious looks and, later, their friends' amazement at the luxury of camping over the stable. From the front entrance there is the vast sweep of lawn out to the rush of Castle Creek, with a hammock strung in a stand of trees and a hot tub—"A real

BELOW: The walls of one master bedroom are made of split logs. Compton designed the bed, which she calls "a western interpretation of old Victorian iron beds using horseshoes and hand-forged arrows." Ralph Lauren wool chair fabric; carpet from Stark.



