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[Reduce, reuse, recycle -- the home edition](#)

- Marci Riseman

Sunday, February 4, 2007



The problem in architect Darrel DeBoer's home -- lack of storage -- is a common one, as is the solution -- taking over a small breakfast room to maximize kitchen space. But the project turned out to be quite uncommon.

The home that DeBoer shares with his wife, artist Shari Arai DeBoer, is a showcase of materials that would have otherwise been discarded. The countertops are remnants from a quarry that produces limestone for architectural façades. Wood for the project came from cabinet shops going out of business -- including maple for the cabinet doors, and padauk, a red African hardwood, for drawer handles. The cabinet door handles were made from bamboo harvested outside the kitchen window. One re-use trick was right under their toes: they removed the old vinyl floor and refinished the vertical grain fir underneath. Even the plaster on the walls is reused: it's made from pozzolan, a Japanese volcanic ash.

In addition to the resource-efficient art of salvage, DeBoer, whose architectural work has spanned three decades, prioritizes healthy and environmentally sustainable products. "Interior-grade plywood is the second worst thing, after carpet, for indoor air quality," he says -- so he made his cabinet boxes of 1-inch by 12-inch pine and formaldehyde-free particleboard rather than plywood. DeBoer used water-based urethane to seal the floors; wood details are finished with Hard Oil, a durable, water-resistant, low-toxic finish. The limestone counter and wood floor are finished with carnauba wax, a natural wax (and an ingredient, DeBoer notes, in the Halloween candy he gave out last year).

Putting these salvaged materials to good use was a family affair: the home was renovated by DeBoer, his father and his cousin, a furniture maker from South Dakota. Their finish work was aided by the Natural Builders, who, while not technically related, spent so much time working with the DeBoers, that, "we might as well be family." The cousins cut and finished the soft countertop stone themselves using woodworking tools. DeBoer's father, who lives in Seattle,

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crafted the stone tile used around the fireplace, on the kitchen counter backsplash, and in the bathroom from stones collected from the beach near his home.

When we hear the adage "reduce, reuse, recycle," we tend to think of utilitarian solutions involving soda cans. But the DeBoer family shows that resources that would otherwise be wasted can be transformed -- beautifully -- into a home.

Resources

Architect

Darrel DeBoer, DeBoer Architects, www.deboerarchitects.com; (510) 865-3669

Finish Work

Kevin Rowell, The Natural Builders Workshop, www.naturalbuildersworkshop.com

Eco-Products

Natural Finishes

Hard Oil from the BioShield Paint Company; available at the Japan Woodworker in Alameda, www.bioshieldpaint.com, www.japanwoodworker.com.

Salvage Yards

This & That Used Building Materials (1701 Rumrill Blvd., San Pablo, (510) 232-1273) and the Habitat for Humanity ReStore (9235 San Leandro St., Oakland, (510) 777-1447), www.eastbayhabitat.org/restore.

-- M.R.

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Quarry remnant countertops and cabinet handles from the bamboo growing outside. Photo by John Lee, special to the Chronicle

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