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Nifty but not over the top

SUNSET IDEA HOUSE ULTRA-FASHIONABLE BUT 'ATTAINABLE'

By [Holly Hayes](#)
[Mercury News](#)

When Sarah Gaffney describes the latest Sunset Idea House as representing "a hodgepodge of how most of us live," it's hard not to laugh out loud.

After all, the 2,998-square-foot residence in Menlo Park is tricked out with all sorts of high-end gadgetry and luxe finishes - the things you expect to see in the magazine's signature showplaces. This house, one of 32 in a development called Lane Woods, is adjacent to the Sunset campus, and when the public stops trooping through it on Aug. 31, it probably will sell for well over \$2 million. *Well* over.



And yet, the house has some light fixtures from Target. Many rooms feature furniture, window treatments and accessories from Ikea. A guest room/library has a beat-up, secondhand bookcase that has been given new life with fresh paint. Funky salvaged file cabinets have a place of honor in the living room.

"This house is not over-the-top like we've done before," says Gaffney, who manages the Idea House program for Sunset. "These are very attainable ideas."

Gaffney and interior designer Kelly Barthelemy, the former Sunset home editor who now runs her own business, say they dreamed up a young family with two kids when brainstorming about how the house would come together.

"We wanted to show how you can personalize what is basically a production house," says Gaffney, referring to the development, which takes its name from the Lane family, longtime publishers of Sunset and the original owners of the property. It offers six, two-story floor plans ranging from 1,719 to 2,998 square feet and are priced from around \$1.5 million, according to builder SummerHill Homes' Web site.

These large homes are close together on relatively small lots. But inside, with 12-foot ceilings and an abundance of windows, the feel is spacious and airy.

Barthelemy envisioned a house full of new things mixed with old things and the "stuff everyone has - stuff from family, collections of objects."

In the family room, a collection of vintage cameras is displayed on floating bamboo shelving that surrounds the flat-screen television. Near the downstairs powder room, an old piece of painted wood has been turned into a handy hook for purses and jackets with the addition of old faucet parts and other items scavenged at Ohmega Salvage in Berkeley.

In the boy's bedroom, a clever headboard was constructed by Peter O. Whiteley, who recently retired as a longtime jack-of-all-trades Sunset staffer and now works as a consultant. The simple frame contains plexiglass pockets that showcase vintage album covers. Barthelemy points out that the pockets could easily be filled with photographs or colorful pieces of fabric.

Whiteley also is responsible for the ingeniously simple private outdoor space that's hung with panels of Sunbrella fabric. It serves as a "portable gazebo" in the small back yard.

"The city wouldn't allow us to build a regular gazebo because it was deemed a 'permanent structure,' " says Gaffney. "So Peter went to work and came up with this PVC frame that he spray-painted a matte silver."

In the large master bedroom suite, Barthelemy wanted a statement bed but blanched at statement-bed prices. Whiteley came to the rescue again, designing a lightweight foam headboard that looks like a deep fireplace mantel shelf. It is painted a creamy white and hangs over a standard-issue bed on a standard-issue bed frame.

But in addition to all of the creative, inexpensive DIY projects on view in the Idea House, there are plenty of higher-end and custom features to make notes about.

In the dining room and guest bath, walls have been textured in a subtle Japanese technique that involves troweling on a mixture of sand, straw and small fossils. In the family room, a shelf beneath the flat-screen TV is made of Bottlestone, which Fireclay Tile creates from concrete and recycled glass. Fireclay also manufactured the buttery custom tile on the living room fireplace.

The enormous kitchen appears even more so because Barthelemy has chosen a creamy-white color scheme: Cabinets are painted, the countertops gleam with sleek white CaesarStone quartz. Punctures of color come from accessories such as the big red-orange light fixture over the spacious center island, which is topped with Teragren butcher-block bamboo treated with food-safe mineral oil.

Practical slide-out pantry shelves provide a slew of storage, and a kid-friendly "snack area" is equipped with a small refrigerator and its own counter so it's out of the way of the main kitchen work spaces. A cork-lined "collection spot" is where keys are stashed, cell phones are recharged and grocery lists are posted.

The master suite is all about comfort. A vestibule leading into the space has a plumbed four-cup coffee maker and refrigerator drawers to hold half-and-half or a few bottles of chardonnay. Walls are painted a creamy taupe - the Benjamin Moore

color is called Spa - and the headboard wall is papered in a coral print. Bed linens are pure white.

In the master bath, the comfort theme continues with a huge soaking tub surrounded by jewel-like glass tiles. Some are matte finish and others are shiny, giving the space a richness of soothing golden color. A walk-in shower - Gaffney jokes that it's big enough for the whole family at once - gets similar treatment.

Throughout the Idea House, Barthelemy has used Benjamin Moore paints from the company's new low-VOC Aura line. She settled on a color called Steam, a warm white, for the kitchen, upstairs landing and other areas, while the living room gets bold swaths of Flint, a steely dark blue, with shots of Buttered Yam on the fireplace wall.

Outside, Shades of Green Landscaping from Mill Valley demonstrates that even a small space can be effectively divided into "rooms." On one end of the rectangular space is an alcohol-fueled outdoor fireplace surrounded by cushy chairs. The center dining area is anchored by a small outdoor kitchen with grill. And the other end has the "portable gazebo" with its privacy curtains.

A stunning fountain by Sausalito designer Hugh McCloud provides a focal point and the soothing sounds of water. Low-maintenance and water-wise plants include agaves and grasses.