



Designing The Perfect Home

VERTU'S PRINCIPAL DESIGNER, FRANK NUOVO, BECOMES HIS OWN ARCHITECT BY REMODELLING HIS HOME.

Frank Nuovo doesn't believe in getting things done in double-quick time. "As a designer, I'm not in any hurry. I want it to be right," says Nuovo, the creative force behind the first luxury personal communication company. The Vertu phones which he designs are both high-tech and also high-touch, and he's applying the same ethos to the remodelling of his house in the Californian residential community of Bel Air. The house in question is a traditional house that sits on an approximate flat acre of what Nuovo describes as a 'fantastic lot'. "It's on a hillside overlooking a lake and a beautiful view," he says, explaining that, because of its views and sitting up high, he incorporated more glass in his design to take in the scenery. At the project's genesis, Nuovo stripped the house down to its bones and drew on green technologies and materials to ensure he builds a house



Nuovo at one of the completed segments of his house.



that reflects the consciousness of the new millennium. "The vision was a balance; I wanted to make sure the designs are as environmentally-friendly as reasonably possible. It's hard to do a fully-dedicated 'Green' house, but I'm combining 'Green' in energy consumption, insulation and materials selections," he adds. "The stone that I'm using isn't so rare that I'm depleting something and the wood is sourced from places like Australia, where they're very conscious of the environmental factors."

You can tell that Nuovo is making plenty of effort in keeping his design as green as possible. The wood that I use is impervious to termites. I'm careful to use something that I don't have to keep reusing. It's very hard, but it's a non-protected type of wood and I use it as a decoration, not the main. I don't put it up everywhere. I use it in places where it'll protect the house... so the bugs don't eat the post and the post falls."

"It's a big remodel," he admits. "I've been working on it for two years and it's about 80 per cent (done), but I'm not targeting to finish for another year. I'm going to have cut stone all around the windows and the stonework could take eight to nine months. On this, I'm working with craftsmen who are working on a number of other projects, and I don't like to hurry anybody. It's more important to get it right."


Getting it right has reaped immediate benefits for Nuovo. "Every window is either double- or triple-insulated and I insulating not only the attic but also the ceiling as well. And I replaced all my heating and cooling with the very latest high-efficiency systems," he says. "But I insulated the house to the extent that we hardly need to use the systems; when you look at all we've done to insulate - I still don't have my front door - the insulation is so great that, even on the hottest day or the coldest day, the temperature only varies a little bit. And, when we turn on the heating or cooling, it cools quickly and doesn't go on again for hours. So, our heating bill has gone way down. It's very energy efficient."

Inside his house, a circulating system with a HEPA filter cuts out the

contaminants in the air, while every lamp has been changed into new lights. His house is also wired for Cat-6, with the fastest wireless systems available, security cameras and sound systems throughout. "I'm doing all the right things, but it is an old house, remodelled," he says, alluding also to the time it's taking to get all the bits and pieces in place. "Everything is done with the latest thinking. My watering systems are all state-of-the-art, where you can programme it and it goes on. There's remote control and everything is wired for a complete smart home."

"Stylistically, I wanted something very friendly and comfortable, open yet somewhat modern," he says of the design. As a result, he's included plenty of stainless steel, copper and stone for a balance in materials and composition. The copper he uses extensively, to keep the bugs away and wrapping it around part of the facade so he doesn't have to keep painting. "All the drains are in copper and I drain everything off the property onto the street very carefully so there's no erosion because I live on a hillside."

Being in earthquake country, Nuovo has also taken the designer's approach by creating a new high-tech acrylic stucco which entails a five-coat process. "It starts with a rough coat, a scratch-coat, then they put fibreglass and then a base coat and a finish coat, making it very beautiful and smooth," he says. "And the entire house is wrapped in this, so, if there's an earthquake, it doesn't crack. It just moves."

"I also put a lot of steel in the ground to support it," he adds. Living in a high-burn area, where gusty Santa Ana winds can send burning brush aloft, Nuovo takes the high-tech approach again by replacing the roof with synthetic slate resistant to fire and cracking. And, while there is still plenty to do, Nuovo is happy with how the remodelling has come along. "It's becoming really beautiful," he says. "I have to put a new driveway to my garage, which has beautiful cabinets - I'm very organised for my cars - and I think my garage now is nicer than my first house." 

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