

# Salem

MAGAZINE



*Award Winning Architect Nathan Good & Artist April Waters*  
*Seeking Prospect and Refuge in the Fairmount Neighborhood*  
**Official City of Salem Parks and Recreation Summer Guide**



# Seeking Prospect & Refuge in the Fairmount Neighborhood

Salem architect Nathan Good wants you to understand something about human evolution when considering his architecture. Nathan, an award-winning designer of custom homes, and his talented wife, artist April Waters, recently completed work on their new Salem home, Altaview. Nathan's thoughtful approach in creating their forever home reflects both his personal and professional beliefs, culminating in Altaview achieving the notable distinction of a LEED Platinum-Certified rating by the U.S. Green Building Council. Their home is an homage to sustainability, practicality, and form – planned to the smallest detail; even their house number, 1859, didn't escape his discerning eye, chosen because it marks the year of Oregon's statehood.

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NATHAN  
GOOD  
ARCHITECTS



1859



Aaron in Great Room

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 “There are qualities that we designed into this home, that I also try to do with the rest of my work, and it has to do with this connection to nature,” Nathan explains. “There is a primal connection with our evolutionary psychology to have preferences for certain types of spaces that offer both prospect and refuge. Through prospect and refuge, one finds an affinity for

environments where you can see without being seen, where our ancestors could hunt without being hunted. We create these spaces at an early age as forts fabricated with blankets and cardboard, migrating to treehouses and eventually to rooms with views. There is something very reaffirming about meeting our practical need for location and safety by connecting our living space to nature.”

Nathan and April sought to create a home that would allow them to thrive-in-place, with flexibility to adapt to its occupants over the years. The home features wide doorways, zero entrance showers, and spaces that can be easily converted to accommodate other occupants if necessary. Also of utmost importance was creating a spacious studio for April’s work, while allowing for private, accessible living space for their adult son, Aaron, also an artist.

Altview does precisely that, providing an overall balance of outlook and enclosure near the top of Salem’s historic Fairmount Hill. Nestled amongst the evergreens with sweeping views of the coastal range, Altview is a synchronous pairing of harmony in nature and progressive, personalized design. “Our goal was to create a home we could live in forever,” explains Nathan. “We factored in affordability, form, function, and zero energy bills.”

Altview is outfitted with solar panels, which reap both environmental and financial advantages. “We do not have any natural gas and had six months last year where our electricity bill was under \$12,” April points out, “and that was only for service fees.”

April knew one of the intangible attributes her forever home needed was a fusion of warmth and inviting spaces with abundant light and uncluttered spaces. Most importantly, her studio needed northern light, a coveted asset for artists. Nathan, who has designed a number of award-winning and extensively published custom homes, knew their home should embody progressive, ecologically beneficial architecture. They both wanted their home to impart a sense of sanctuary while maintaining a light, spacious feel.

“That’s one of the contradictions we worked with; reconciling warm, inviting and of nature with clean and contemporary. Those could be seen as opposites.” True to his belief that a challenge is a good thing, Nathan executed on this dichotomy, resulting in a home that effortlessly pulls off these diametric ideals.

When they scouted land for their homesite, a multi-year process, they knew it would have to be special. They finally struck gold in their .24-acre home-site within walking distance of Nathan’s architecture office in downtown Salem. Altview’s design carefully follows the contours of the narrow, sloped lot. “The layout of the land was a challenge in a good way,” explains Nathan. “There’s a saying we use in our facilitation work, ‘A problem well-defined is half-solved,’ which applied to the land we chose and the basis for the

design of the home.” He pauses for a moment, and says with a smile, “What was more interesting was having your wife as a client.”

Each room in Altview affords majestic views; the sweeping vista of the Cascade mountain range on the horizon and glimpses of the Willamette River, spilling western light into the living spaces. On the main entry level, the master-bedroom speaks to efficiency of space, embracing both warmth and brightness. The placement of the south and west-facing windows give way to views of the Minto Brown and Fairmount Parks while also cradling its occupants in the trees, as if suspended in a treehouse. “The greenspace to the south is part of Fairmont park,” April says, “so we will always have this lovely view. I think being close to nature and connected to the space around us is so important.”

A focal point in the main living area is the low-profile sealed woodstove that is a source of energy efficient heat without compromising indoor air quality. The home’s heat recovery ventilator filters and distributes fresh air throughout the home through a series of supply and return tubes. Or, as Nathan refers to them, “The lungs of the home.”

Cozy counterpoints to the spacious open floor plan exist where Nathan chose to curve the wall surfaces, softening the space while still allowing for flow, acting as the perfect backdrop to show-

case their mutual commitment to using natural materials. “We both love wood and wanted a lot of it,” Nathan explains. “We used many types of local woods; white oak, maple, Douglas fir, and redwood. Our contractor, Shan Stassens of Winsome Construction, worked closely with us to identify wood suppliers that fit our tight budget.”

The front entry showcases salvaged redwood sourced by Bruce Wadleigh of Barnwood Naturals from a water tank in Silverton. “Bruce provides some amazing wood. We work with them whenever we can.” Barnwood Naturals supplied a striking proscenium arch of salvaged hand-hewn beams repurposed from a century-old barn south of Salem and reassembled on the site by Ron Parvin of Adagio Construction.

April points to the gorgeous oak floors provided by Zena Hardwoods as a source of visual warmth and connection to their community. “Zena is one of the regional leaders in providing FSC certified hardwoods, which we love to specify for our clients,” Nathan adds.

Eschewing the chaos of a busy home, April envisioned an environment akin to a simple canvas for displaying art – both her own and by other artists. Nathan, on the other hand, is an enthusiastic collector of unique objects and curiosities: an antique egg separator formed from an unbroken metal coil, a whimsical root ball, and one-of-

a-kind spectacles. The object itself is secondary to the form; if it’s beautiful and works well, Nathan is drawn to it.

April, an accomplished artist, needed a space that would accommodate the needs of her studio. “I asked my architect for a studio large enough to enable ample room for my large paintings. The studio and home are exactly the right size for us.”

Inside her spacious, light-filled work space, April can see the sky change out her westward-facing windows and work near her north-facing windows. Bright and airy on even the most overcast of days, visitors to April’s studio might be gifted a glimpse of a large (44’ x 72”) landscape she is painting of the Oregon coast, or her latest “Shero” portrait of Dr. Sylvia Earle, an internationally known marine biologist.

April traveled around the United States to meet with the eight dynamic international women leaders who were the subjects of her large-scale portraits (80” by 60”). Each painting features a woman who bravely carried the torch for humanitarian and environmental justice, most of whom have made significant contributions to the equitable sharing and protection of clean water.

No additional travel is on the agenda for now, allowing April and Nathan time to add landscaping to their home and enjoy the beauty of the Pacific Northwest from their refuge at Altview.



April in Studio

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