

## PERSONAL STYLE

# Stunning home a special find

Design inspired by Haida architecture and a fascination with treehouses

By Judy Swanson  
Staff Reporter

Ten years ago Ashley Heck sat down at his kitchen table and designed himself a weekend retreat on the Sunshine Coast.

He had an architect commit it to blueprint and a local builder bring it to life.

What he didn't know at the time was the house was really made for Veronica Mannix.

Fast forward to 2001. Heck decided to sell and Mannix, an award-winning documentary filmmaker who had been looking for a year to buy a rural haven with-in commuting distance of Vancouver, is shown the house.

It's in the wrong part of the peninsula and facing the wrong way, but the moment she walked into Heck's glass-and-cedar hillside house, she knew she'd come home.

"When I walked in, I was speechless," recalled Mannix with a smile. "I felt like Ashley built this house for me."

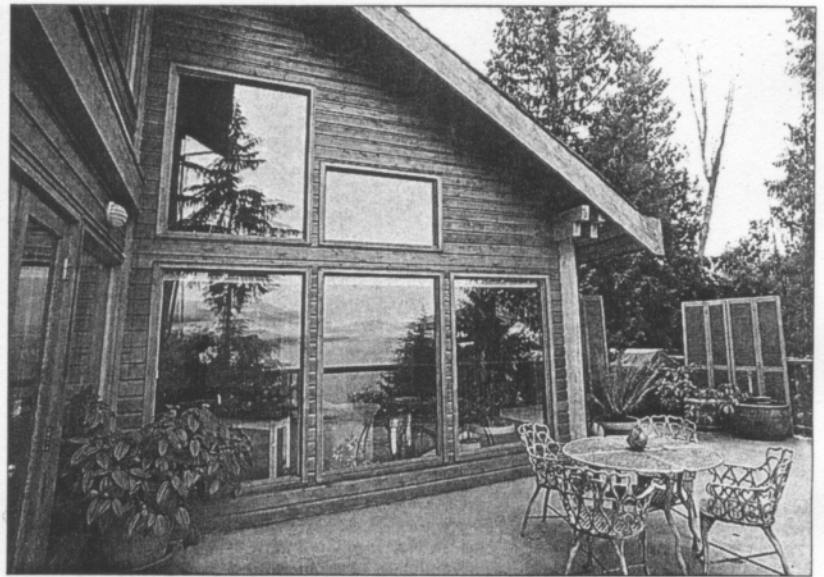
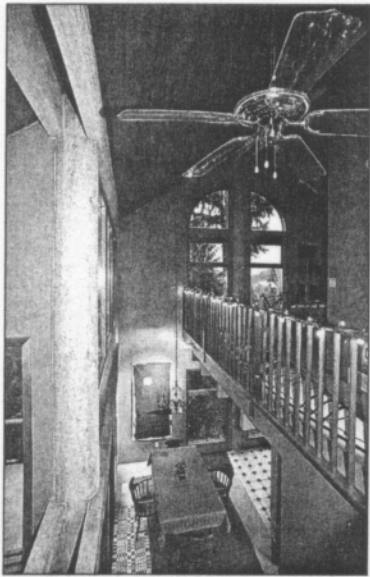
Inspired by Haida architecture and his own childhood fascination with treehouses, Heck designed the post-and-beam structure to take advantage of the view up fiord-like Sechelt Inlet. Sixteen white-washed cedar timbers brought in from Oregon support the home's 2,500 sq. ft. floorplan and 1,500 sq. ft. of decking spread over three levels.

"Every part of the house is aesthetically pleasing," added the maker of *Through the Blue Lens* and the *Whistleblower*. "It's hard to believe this is the only house Ashley has designed."

Heck, who is currently renovating another house nearby, said he has no regrets about selling to Mannix.

"What I miss most is the moonlight coming through the glass blocks," he said. "It means a lot to me that Veronica loves the house so much."

You enter the house on the top floor. Besides the foyer, there's also the master bedroom, a bathroom and a sitting room Mannix calls the screening room. It's furnished with a wall unit with television, a futon and in place of an ottoman, the massage table Mannix used to support herself through four years of art school.



Keith Thirkell photos — The Province

The stunning cedar-and-glass home of Veronica Mannix features top-floor walkway (left) and huge outdoor deck (right).



Ashley Heck (right) designed the post-and-beam, cedar-and-glass home with an extraordinary view of Sechelt Inlet. Just before Veronica Mannix (left) bought it, she felt as though it had been built for her.



The living room and upper level of Veronica Mannix's home.

"I call this the crow's nest," said Mannix, indicating the master bedroom with its four-poster bed overlooking the inlet. "The crows come here every morning and bang on the roof and when I'm up there, it feels like the prow of a ship. This is my favourite place in the house."

Below is a vaulted living room, kitchen and dining room, a second bathroom and a spacious bedroom with double french doors etched to exactly reproduce the view from the living

room windows.

Mannix refers to it as the expedition room in honour of her kayaking friends who visit on a regular basis.

On the lowest level is an office and a self-contained one-bedroom suite that Mannix uses to supplement her film income as a bed-and-breakfast operation.

"I've slept in every room of the house," she said. "I spent the first winter in the main-floor bedroom. Then I moved into the suite. I felt overwhelmed by the size of the

house at first. I had to get used to it."

Painted a warm tarragon green inside, the home is as graceful and serene as the trees outside.

"It's not all girly and I love that," she said. She adds that all her artwork, including paintings by Vancouver artists Yang Hong and Debi Grupe, a photograph of a Mount Athos monk by Robert Semeniuk and her own photo montages, complement the green walls.

The living room is simply fur-

nished with sofa, tables and a large flat-screen TV. On the television is what appears to be a piece of sculpture that turns out to be the Japan Award (their equivalent of an Oscar) that she won for *Through the Blue Lens*.

The other permanent resident of the house is Tia, a 15-year-old Belgian shepherd-red heeler cross whose unusual colourings still turns heads.

"I tell everybody I bought this as a retirement home for my dog," said Mannix.