

The Cubist

BY SCOTT BROWN

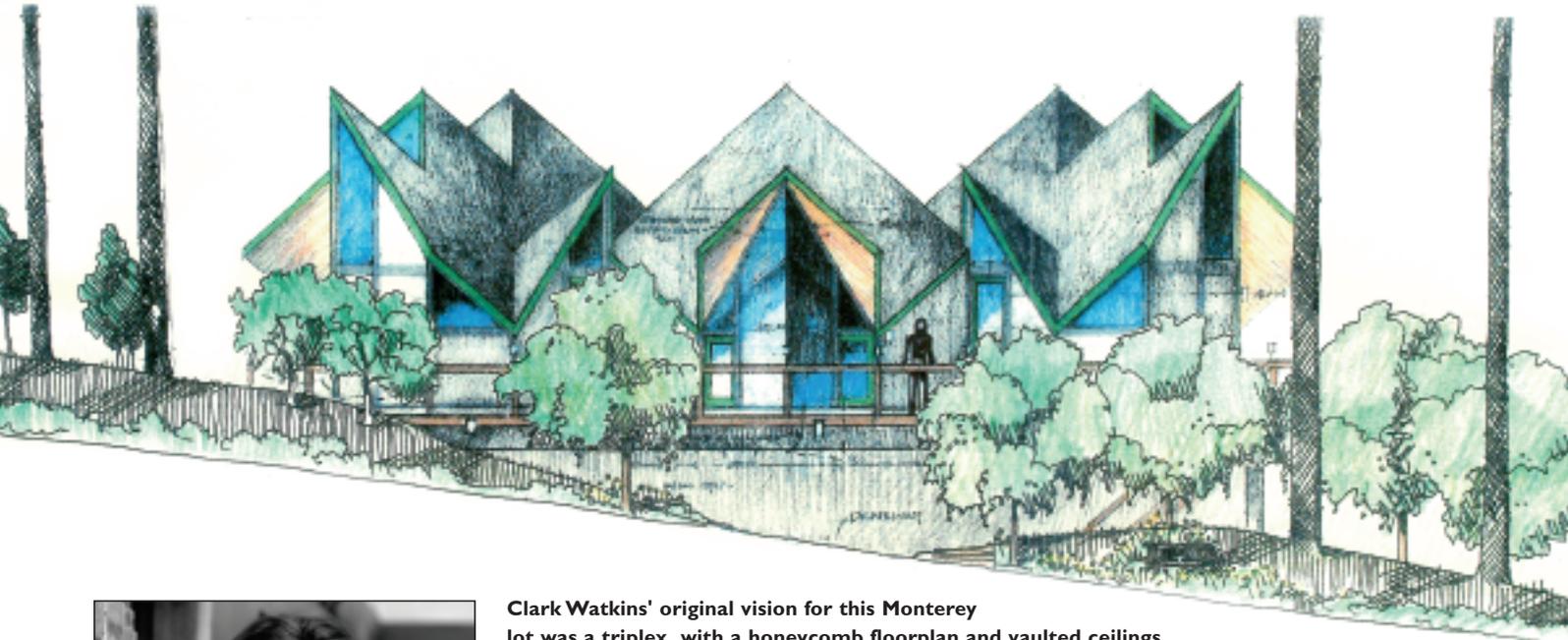


Photo: Kelli Urdahl

Clark Watkins' original vision for this Monterey lot was a triplex with a honeycomb floorplan and vaulted ceilings.

About five years ago, Carmel architect Clark Watkins began experimenting with cubes, tilting them up on an end and intersecting them at 90-degree angles. "I love the interesting spaces it creates," Watkins said. "Sloping walls inside and outside...it creates a new orientation."

But the look is a bit progressive for the Monterey Peninsula, and it wasn't until about a year ago that Watkins found a client willing to indulge his innovation. Longtime Monterey resident Fred Fozounmayeh had owned a 5,000-square-foot lot on the corner of Linden St. and Irving Ave. since 1963. But he'd never developed the space, which was zoned for a single-family dwelling or three apartment units. He opted for the latter, and brought Watkins on to do the design.

CHALLENGES

Zoning indicated Watkins needed to make a pair of the units two-bedroom, and create four parking spaces. Meanwhile, the lot sloped diagonal-

ly, like a table with one short leg. It also had several mature trees on it. Most significantly, the next-door neighbor's front door would look into the side of any proposed new home.

SOLUTIONS

Utilizing his cube theory, Watkins created a honeycombed floorplan: three single-story units with vaulted ceilings beginning at floor level and meeting at a right angle nearly 20 feet above. To negotiate the sloped lot, he gave the structure a quality like a flying carpet. It would be a modified A-frame — somewhat like a ski cottage — featuring tall, narrow windows that followed the roofline. Watkins envisioned a deck around the circumference of the building that would offer access to all three units. He also created a surface parking lot with the living space above.

But Watkins encountered difficulty when he went before the planning commission. Neighbors said they admired the design, but felt it was too tall and interrupted their views. They also said it was out of place, belonging more to Tahoe than Monterey.

A determined Watkins went back to the drawing board. He brought the roofline down nearly eight feet and made the dwellings multi-storied. He also added apartment access through the parking area. The second design was approved, and is now on the waiting list for water credits.

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