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RURAL STUDIO

Teaches citizen architects the value of community, P. 52



CARMEL VALLEY RANCH RESORT

staging a comeback

A West Coast resort is restored to its former—and greener—glory via The Paul Davis Partnership

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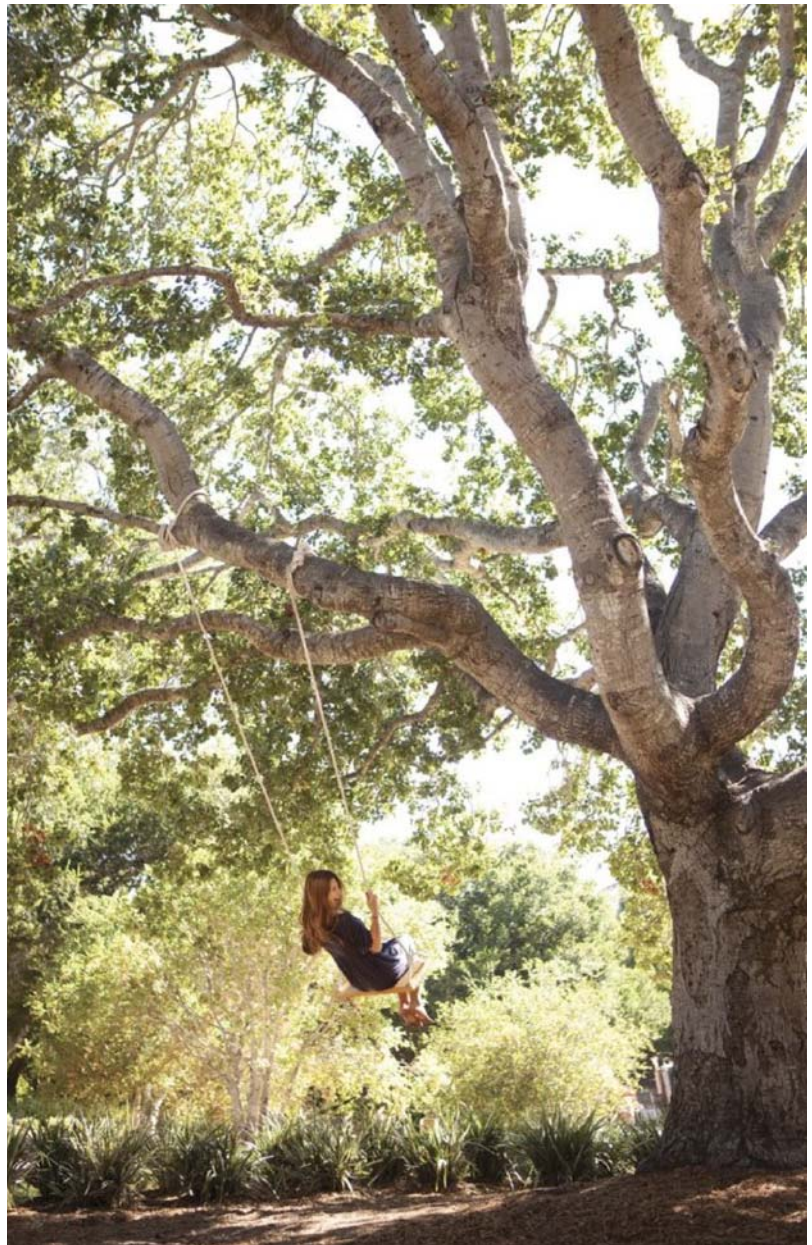
It is the mid-1980s. Ronald Reagan is President, Madonna is blaring through any radio you put on, *Back to the Future* is movie of the moment, and men and women alike are tearing through Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. It is a time of excess and splurges; the country club culture is very much alive. Enter: the Carmel Valley Ranch Resort.

The Carmel Valley Ranch Resort was developed in the mid-'80s as a destination resort with a hotel, residential clusters, a golf course, and a tennis club. In its day, it was a luxury club, a place to relax with scenic views and the best of service. Unfortunately, the club changed hands often, and as time rolled on, so did music, movies, presidents, design, and style; even Madonna needed a facelift or two.

Fast forward to 2010, and The Paul Davis Partnership, a Monterey, California-based architecture and planning firm, is tasked with an extensive remodel for the Carmel Valley Ranch Resort. Paul W. Davis, who runs the firm with his father, feels the practice's design ideals have been green since its inception in 1987. "As architects, we were trained to consider a building's orientation, how to minimize its impact on the site, and maximize natural light, passive heating, and natural ventilation and cooling," Davis says. "Our firm's work is within the greater Monterey Bay area—the central coast of California—and we are committed to responsible and sustainable development in such a sensitive and unique environment with rich historical heritage."

The 12-person firm was brought on to help in the renovation of the Carmel Valley Ranch Resort in 2005, when it switched hands and went to Luxury Resort Hotels. The project changed hands again last year, moving to Geolo Capital, but The Paul Davis Partnership stayed on.

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So far, the project has included a remodel of the main pool and deck area, a new gift shop and spa, and a new reception area constructed using the original porte-cochère. The remodel also included the addition of a 3,000-square-foot ballroom as well as a fitness space, a full-update on all hotel rooms, and a renovation of the pro shop. “A sloped area with no trees below the lodge was also transformed into an agricultural demonstration area—with a large chef’s garden that is used in the guests’ activity programs—a small vineyard, and a small lavender farm with beekeeping,” Davis adds.

The Paul Davis Partnership also renovated all landscaped areas to include native and drought-tolerant landscaping and extremely low-flow irrigation systems that use reclaimed water from the ranch’s wastewater-reclamation system, as water is a big issue in the area. In addition to installing a green roof over the spa, the firm reused as many of the existing structures as possible, instead of moving forward with demolition and new construction. “Minimizing the expansion of the footprint on the land was accomplished by reprogramming existing interior and exterior spaces,” Davis explains.

REVIVAL. The Paul Davis Partnership is leading an extensive remodel of the Carmel Valley Ranch Resort—returning the resort to its former glory while incorporating an arsenal of modern green touches, including a water-reclamation system and a green roof over the spa. Photos: Paul Dyer.



Yet the project was not without its trials and struggles. The hotel and facilities needed to stay open during the entire construction phase, so scheduling became a challenge: day-long design charrettes with the owners, hotel management, and the design team were required. The two historic ranch buildings also proved a challenge, as they required major structural upgrades without any impact to the exterior walls.

All have been extremely pleased with the renovation thus far, and though the hotel hasn’t been through quite as many reincarnations as Madonna, with all its new green features, it seems it too may be able to sustain a career for another 20-plus years. **gb&d**