

STARING DOWN CITY STYLE

THE LOOKER

THE
DESIGN
SCOUT

FALL 2016

"It's like a spaceship landed in our yard," says homeowner Stefanie Felser of her 650-square-foot guesthouse. ➡➡



How to Build a Backyard Spaceship

Stargazing inside a hole-punched guesthouse.

By Lauren Murrow

From a distance, the single-story structure in Stefanie Felser's yard appears straightforward: cedar siding topped by a flat roof. But as you move closer, you start to understand why Felser describes the 650-square-foot guesthouse in otherworldly terms: "It's like a spaceship landed in our yard." That feeling derives from the round, glowing "Beam me up, Scotty" portals puncturing the roof and sunshade, an effect that principal Eric Haesloop of Turnbull Griffin Haesloop architects affectionately likens to Swiss cheese.

Cheese, *Star Trek* transporter—either way, it's an improvement. When Stefanie and Josh Felser bought their funky '70s-era Marin home in 2002, there was a defunct, dilapidated art studio in its yard. Although it was in a prime location, atop a small hill in a cedar-shaded clearing, it was falling apart. "We just let it go for years," says Ste-

THE DESIGN SCOUT

↑ The 25-foot-wide patio serves as an alfresco dining area by day and a teenage dance floor at night, lit by color-changing LED lights by Hue.

↓ "It's a short walk to the main house," says architect Eric Haesloop. "But it feels secluded because of the topography and the fringe of trees."



DAVID WAKELY

THE LOOKER



Prefabricated bubble skylights were strategically placed to channel natural light. The largest of the portals measures five and a half feet.

Owner Stefanie Felser furnished the cottage with imported bedding, rugs, and furniture from Summer House, a design store in Mill Valley.



Between the king-size bed and the sectional, the guesthouse is a popular spot for middle school sleepovers.

fanie. As the couple’s three kids grew older—they’re now 10, 16, and 18—she fantasized about refurbishing the decades-old eyesore. Not as a studio, per se: more like a miniature get-away 120 feet from home. She enlisted Haesloop, who has designed a number of tiny homes over the past decade. (His Berkeley backyard contains its own 432-square-foot stunner.)

Inspired by the redwood and cedar trees dotting the property, Haesloop hoped the hole-punched roof would approximate dappled light. “I had this vision of sunlight filtering through tree trunks,” he says. The conceit was abstract, but the execution was surprisingly simple: The orbs, ranging from two and a half to five and a half feet wide, are premanufactured bubble skylights.

Inside, the deceptively roomy cottage includes a living room, a kitchenette, a full bathroom, and a bedroom. “It’s this little house that has all these multigenerational uses,” says Haesloop. It’s used for in-law visits, teenage parties, and middle school sleepovers. “Between the king-size bed, the sofa, and sleeping bags, it’s not unusual to have 10 kids sleeping over in that tiny house,” says Stefanie. Josh rigged up color-changing Hue lights on the patio, which transitions into an outdoor dance floor.

On evenings when the cottage isn’t overrun by kids, Stefanie and her husband often head up the hill to watch sports or *Game of Thrones*. “It feels like we’re in an entirely different place,” she says. “It’s like having a second home we can walk to.” ■

THE
DESIGN
SCOUT



Though the 650-square-foot guesthouse is petite, oversize skylights in every room create an airy, indoor-outdoor effect.



DAVID WAKELY