

People at home: Exciting interior comes in a plain, brick wrapper Plain, brick wrapper hides love...

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Architect Fredericka Rosengren and her 3 1/2-year-old son, Erik, relax in the soaring 22-foot-high living room of the coach house that she and her husband Tom remodeled.



A large redwood deck, surrounded by beds of gravel and ground covers, provides a low-maintenance garden off the side of the brick house.

People at home

Exciting interior comes in a plain, brick wrapper

By June Hill
Home Furnishings Editor

AN INSCRUTABLE brick facade provides no clues to what lies within Thomas and Fredericka Rosengren's Old Town house. It turns it back to the world.

Inside, a tiny foyer and long, narrow hallway continue the aura of mystery. Then, suddenly, the hall opens into a spectacular 22 1/2-foot-high living room set off by a beautiful outdoor garden.

The surprises continue on the second floor where two bedrooms and a greenhouse-like office/studio share balcony views of the living room. The dining area, kitchen, and playroom on the first floor all look out on the garden.

The optically exciting interior and no-nonsense facade combine to present a textbook lesson in inner city remodeling, and well they should. Both

the Rosengrens are architects, and Tom, an associate partner at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, designed the new interior for this one-time coach house.

TOM'S DESIGN takes full advantage of the delightful garden that wraps around two sides of the house. Enclosed by a high stockade fence, the serene garden gives a distinctly exurban feeling to this city dwelling.

Neither Tom nor wife Ricki have much time for gardening, but careful planning enables them to enjoy their landscape the year around with a minimum of effort. The garden has a central redwood deck, measuring 12 by 22 feet, surrounded by shrubs, trees, low-maintenance ground covers, and gravel walkways delineated by strips of redwood.

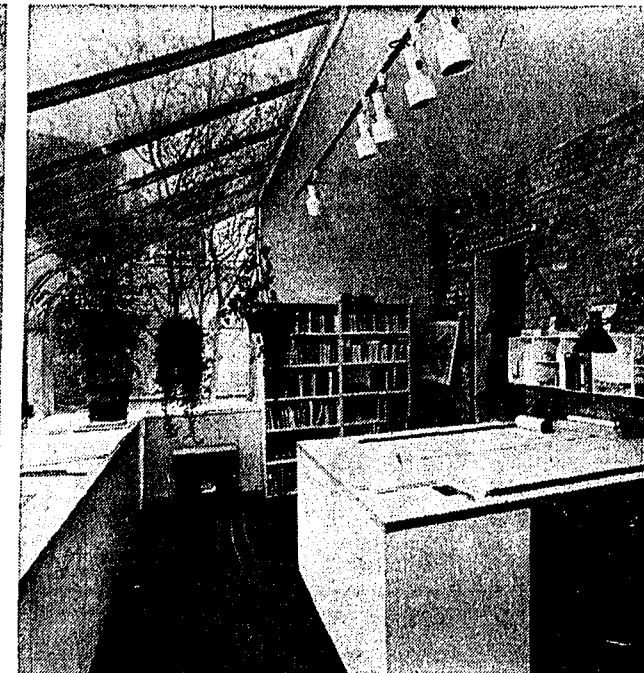
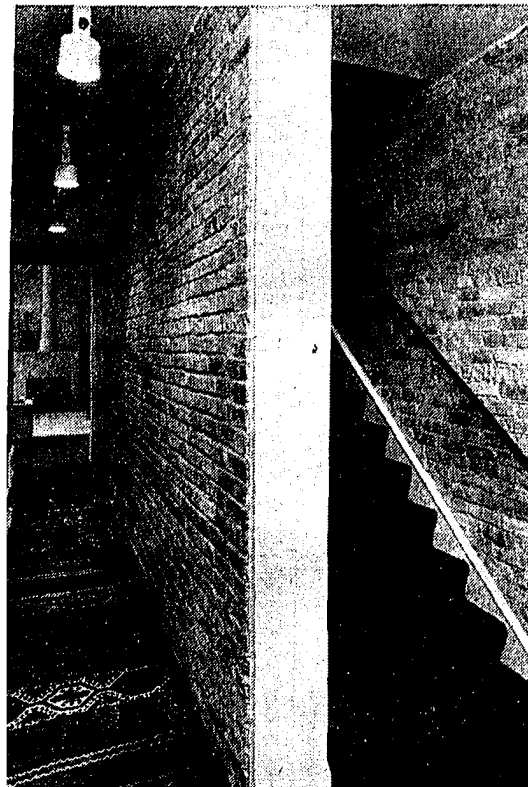
The thoughtful planning of the house reflects the

Rosengrens' preference for streamlined, functional space. Their classic modern furniture, upholstered in neutral leathers and wools, is set against a backdrop of white walls.

Color is provided by plants, accessories, and a collection of rugs they purchased while living in Iran for a year. Sturdy woven Kilim rugs are their favorites and came at comfortable prices. Iranians prefer the hand-knotted varieties.

The rugs dapple the oak and carpeted floors and hang on walls. Huge, fat floor pillows are fashioned from camel bags. Functional accessories, like the TV and Tom's guitar and music stand, are kept in full view in the living room. A storage wall there contains a wet bar and provides open storage space for books, records, and stereo equipment.

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The upstairs studio/office, above, overlooks the living room. A greenhouse roof fills the room, formerly an outside deck, with light. The deft play of space and ceiling heights used in the foyer and narrow hallway, left, leading to the living room, provides an optical surprise.

Tribune photos by John Austed

Plain, brick wrapper hides lovely home

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TODAY'S CRISP good looks are a long way from the four-car coach house/garage with second floor chauffeur's apartment the Rosengrens bought 3½ years ago. The couple gutted the building, then had the exterior sandblasted and tuckpointed. Instead of eliminating the two original double-door garage openings, the Rosengrens enclosed them with new walls so that they became niches for storage cabinetry.

The staircase to the second floor was retained, and a deck located off the chauffeur's apartment was enclosed to make a studio/office for Ricki. An unusual touch here is the greenhouse roof that makes the studio a light-filled, pleasant place to work.

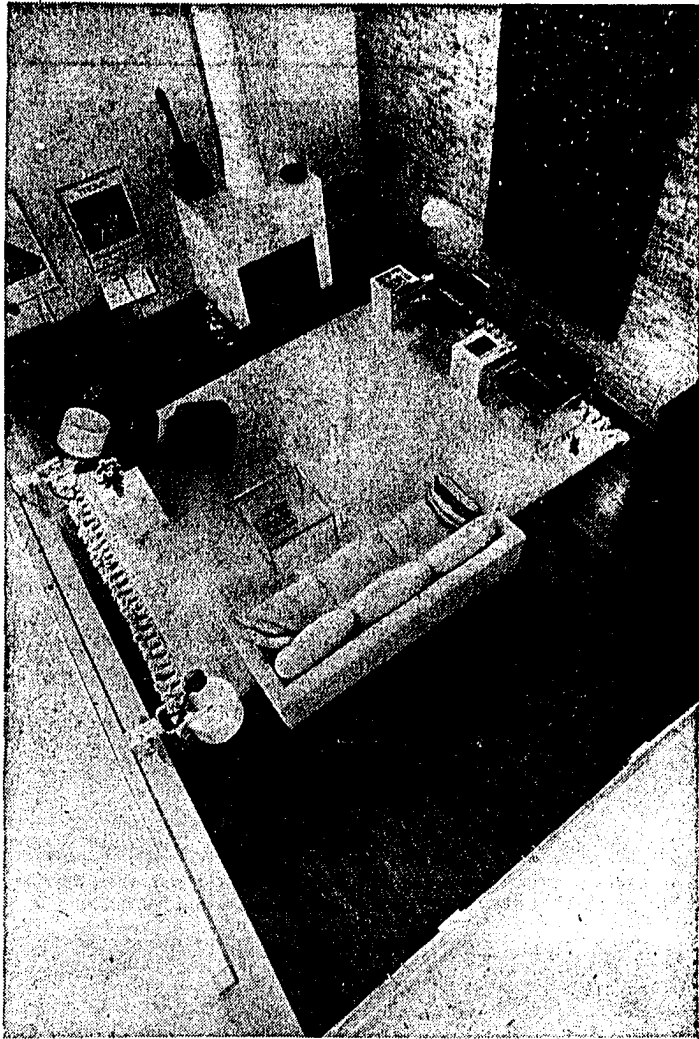
The studio looked great from the first, but being intended for people and not plants the greenhouse environment needed some tailoring. It was drafty in winter and, says Ricki, "we used to come up to draw and have to wear sunglasses."

They lined the single-glazed windows with Plexiglas to curtail the winter breezes and added a gray-tinted acrylic liner to deflect heat and light in summer.

THERE WERE changes to be made downstairs, too. A small room adjacent to the kitchen started out as a breakfast room, but has metamorphosed into a play room for son Erick, 3½. Their new arrival Mark, 4 months, will be using it soon.

"We finally gave in to the battle of the toys," says Ricki. Now there are play areas "everywhere" and a cabinet in each room devoted to toys.

With the breakfast room lost to the younger generation, the Rosengrens now eat all their meals at 8-foot-long, oak-topped table that occupies one side of the 21-by-28-foot main living area. Another often-used item is the nearby living room fireplace, which digested two tons of wood last winter. Devoted living rooms users, Tom and Ricki spared no space for a family room.



Looking down on the living room from the second-floor balcony (above) provides a view of the room's thoughtful blend of natural materials and classic furnishings. Spare white laminated cabinetry in the kitchen (left) requires a minimum of maintenance. A pass-through leads to the playroom.

