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Contributors



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Photos courtesy of Serious Fun Studio

The Mazama workshop, storage space and carport built with leftover materials.

Partnering in preservation

Architects and builder used surplus materials to create ‘Hugg Hut’

BY JULIA BABKINA

In the architectural world, building materials typically follow an architect’s design, but for one local architectural firm, the process was reversed for an unusual project.

Methow Home 2023

The architects at Twisp-based Serious Fun Studio were asked to design a workshop, storage space and carport from surplus materials. If that sounds like a setup for a competition reality show, it is not, but rather a collaboration between two friends — one a builder and the other an architect.

When Chris Huggins, a Seattle builder, needed a workshop/storage/carport on his property in Mazama, he turned to his friend Kit Kollmeyer, who runs

the architectural firm Serious Fun Studio with his wife, Samantha Kollmeyer. When Kit and Sam worked in Seattle, Huggins built a house Kit designed.

Huggins had some supplies left over from a project he did five years ago that included marine grade plywood and timbers from a custom mill order that required a minimum quantity.

“For my entire career, I have always tried to salvage and re-use materials as things come up,” said

Huggins.

“You kind of have to be a hoarder, a little bit,” said Kit Kollmeyer. “It’s hard not to look at a leftover beam and think, that’s useful, I could use that somewhere, but they often end up sitting outside for years. I appreciate that Chris actually had something to do with it. We haven’t had a project other than that one where someone came to us and said, ‘here’s a material list, what can you design from the material list?’ It’s really unique. Usually it’s a blank slate, what’s right for the site.”

“It’s a fun process for us, because the builders know what they want,” he added. “We also like helping people realize their dreams for their home but it’s unique to work with a contractor who understands what you’re talking about. They internalize how it’s going to be built while you’re working through it and they’re always thinking about ideas.”

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

A year prior to this project, Huggins built an artist studio for his



A leftover beam was used in the project.

wife entirely using leftover materials. The marine grade plywood on the ceiling in the workshop is typically very expensive plywood.

Huggins estimates that he saved 50% on materials to build the workshop and 90% on the art studio by using recycled materials.

When the Hugg Hut, as the Kollmeyers lovingly call it, was ready to be built, Huggins provided an opportunity to lead the project to a young carpenter, Lucas Troutman, who wanted to hone his carpentry skills. Huggins knew Troutman because he was in his son’s Boy Scout troop.

“Knowing that Lucas was here and he wanted to be a carpenter, my husband said, ‘Lucas, this is going to be your project,’” said Huggins’ wife, Mylen Huggins.

Troutman built the shed with fellow Boy Scout and a Huggins employee in Seattle, Jack Taylor, along with Huggins’ two sons.

“It was too much to do myself in a timely fashion and I had the chance to help some younger guys starting out in the industry,” said Huggins. “The plan and approach was deliberately simple and conventional but still depended on very close attention to accuracy and alignment.”

The workshop has two sliding floor-to-ceiling doors that glide at 90-degree angles away from each



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other, creating an open corner. The corner provides ample space to load and unload. It also provides an indoor-outdoor work environment in the summer.

A carport adjacent to the workshop serves its main function — to keep snow off — without sacrificing valuable space in the workshop. A sleek storage unit houses Huggins’ tools.

By placing the storage unit and carport outside of the workshop, all of the 650 square feet of open space in the workshop is available for project work. “Chris gets a lot of inspiration from houses that he builds in Seattle,” said Mylen Huggins.

COORDINATING FROM THE START

“We really love working with contractors because they have great ideas and they know how to build things,” said Kit Kollmeyer. “Working with Chris made it easy.”

Kollmeyer has a unique perspective as an architect because he grew up building houses with his



By placing the storage unit and carport outside of the workshop, all of the 650 square feet in the workshop is available for project work.

father. He is also a woodworker. That background has informed his designs and his approach to working with contractors. In their own studio, Kollmeyers buck the

traditional design process and incorporate input from contractors from the very beginning.

“Even if we’re working on a custom project with a client, we try to

get a contractor on board before we start design,” said Kit Kollmeyer. “That way we can get buy-off from the contractor on our entire design process ... so that they’re not

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receiving this plan set and saying, this isn't what I would do here and, how am I going to do that?"

Often, an architect wouldn't involve a contractor until the design is finished, but Kollmeyer says they are drawbacks to this model.

"If a contractor starts from the beginning, then they are invested in the project, they've been involved in all the client decisions so they know why a client would choose to do one thing over another," he said. "They've had the ability to voice their opinions so they really feel like it's their project and it's not just something that they're building. And at the end of the day, by the time we're finished with design and it's permitted and ready to build, we're confident the contractor knows what they are doing."

Kollmeyer said the contractor is also able to affect cost because they can suggest affordable materials that worked well on other projects.

TWO MINDS AT WORK

The Kollmeyers also have a

unique way of working with one another so that their clients get two minds working on a project instead of one.

"When we start, Sam and I work on our own concept for the project, and we usually show our client two, three, four different unique concepts," Kit said. "So, we don't influence each other when we're working on that first concept, and then we critique each other before we show the client. Once that's set, we're pretty fluid about who works on what part. We're always both in on all the client meetings. We work really well together. We balance each other out."

Sam said the name of their studio came to them during a road trip, from a quotation by one of their design heroes, Charles Eames, a prominent mid-century architect.

"Charles once said, you should 'take your pleasure seriously,' so it's a play on that," she said. "We love doing what we do and it's fun. We take it seriously. It's serious fun."



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