

# Home & Garden



Photos by ELLIOTT JOHNSON

David and Claudia Slaughter's Templeton home mixes rustic, industrial and starkly modern vibes.

## Templeton couple turn 'simple box' into a home

BY REBECCA JURETIC  
Special to The Tribune

On a remote stretch of road in Templeton, the home of David and Claudia Slaughter gets few visitors.

"Some people stop by thinking it's a tasting room," David Slaughter said of the simple, modern structure.

The couple came to the area, looking for just this type of rural existence.

The former Orange County residents property-shopped in Texas and South Carolina before finding a 5-acre lot in northern San Luis Obispo County.

"It was paradise on earth," Slaughter reminisced.

They purchased the property in 2016 from the direct descendant of the original land grant recipient. It sat adjacent to Justin Vineyards and J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines, untouched except for sporadic use as a cow pasture.

From the start, the Slaughters knew their house wouldn't be anything typical.

"We're creative — we can't stand to have something anyone else has," said David Slaughter, a civil engineer who has worked on planned communities in Southern California.

He calls the style of their Templeton home "modern industrial with a vintage twist."

The couple worked with Jade Architecture and Semmes & Co. Builders, both in Atascadero, to design and build a 1,753-square-



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foot structure.

It's a "simple box," Slaughter said, "the smallest house possible."

There is only one bedroom, a small office and two bathrooms. Three walls are concrete block and one wall is comprised almost entirely of windows that "allow us to be fully connected with the rhythms of nature and the remote country," he explained.

Semmes & Co., which specializes in sustainable building practices, incorporated energy-efficient features such as solar

panels that power the water heater and the in-floor radiant heating. Passive solar design that manipulates sunlight to heat or cool a home, eliminates the need for air conditioning.

The team took over a year to get the design just right.

With little space to work with, the Slaughters planned every inch, pre-selecting locations for all of their furniture, art and heirlooms.

The couple's décor is as unique as the house itself. "You won't find anything from Pottery Barn here," said

David Slaughter, who crafted many of the industrial-style furniture pieces himself.

Interspersed with these modern furnishings are heirlooms from Claudia Slaughter's family, shipped via three containers from Germany.

The combination of rustic, industrial and starkly modern is a "nice contrast," David Slaughter said. "The building is super modern, but there's no warmth. It's the furniture, the woods, the antiques that bring that warmth."

Each room has an eclectic

mix. In the foyer, next to the neon green front door, is a vignette of antiques including an apple sack, milk cans and an old sewing machine table showcasing rustic bird houses crafted by David Slaughter.

He built several pieces in the master suite, including vanities with rusted steel backsplashes and a bed from maple and plate steel. Over the bed are old road signs salvaged from demolition sites around the world.

Softening these industrial elements are elegant Old World touches such as a sofa inherited from Claudia Slaughter's grandmother, covered in the original 1920s upholstery fabric, and shower tiles with a design inspired by Roman ruins.

In the dining area of the open great room, repurposed finds include a dining table salvaged from a warehouse and whimsical pendant lights made from license plates. Red lockers that once belonged to Huntington Beach High School add a pop of color in an otherwise neutral space.

The kitchen features Silestone countertops in a grey-brown that complements the concrete floors. The couple opted for a large pantry instead of upper cabinets.

The result is a space that feels more open, and storage areas that don't require climbing or reaching.

The Slaughters moved in during the summer of 2019. Their first landscaping project was to replant three barrel cacti that David Slaughter has taken from house to house with him since he was 16.

The final product is a unique and personalized living space that "might not appeal to everybody," he said, but is a perfect mix of old and new that "makes this modern building feel like a

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home."

#### TIPS

**Modern storage.** Unconventional storage pieces can add an unexpected twist to a modern-industrial space. Old-school lockers might stand in for dining room storage, or a tool cabinet could hold clothes and accessories in a bedroom.

**Open up.** In a small kitchen, consider eliminating upper cabinets and instead installing a large pantry or open shelving. The result is a more open, airy space.

**Use passive solar.** Windows can be effective at heating or cooling a home if positioned correctly. High-set clerestory windows both enhance light and let in a cooling cross-breeze. South-oriented windows with a substantial overhang bring in warming sunlight during the winter yet provide ample shading in the summer.



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Old road signs hang above a bed built from maple and plate steel in the Templeton home of David and Claudia Slaughter.



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A neon green door leads to the foyer of David and Claudia Slaughter's Templeton home.