



Margaret Mayfield via AP

This Feb. 19, 2017 photo shows frosted glass garage doors on a home in Los Osos, Calif.

Garage trend? Think versatility, not parking

By KATHERINE ROTH
Associated Press

The American garage is world famous. But not necessarily for cars.

Silicon Valley started in the Palo Alto, California, garage of the Packard family, where Hewlett-Packard was founded, according to the National Register of Historic Places. Steve Jobs launched Apple in his parents' garage. And dozens of American bands started in garages. Amazon, Disney, Google, Harley-Davidson? All famously launched out of garages.

Garages have, for generations, been places for tinkering and creating, where kids build soapbox-derby cars or refinish kayaks. Some garages are home to small catering kitchens or extensive wine collections, and many feature extra refrigerators or freezers. And of course, they often serve as a deep storage and workshop space.

Designers and architects say the idea of the garage as the ultimate multi-purpose room is alive and well, and that modern garages are finally being seriously retooled to better suit those myriad uses.

"When it comes to garage design, functionality is always key. I'm seeing a lot more glass garage doors, whether frosted or clear. It's more fitting for most modern homes, and makes the space more versatile because it lets in the light," said Jonathan Savage of Nashville-based Savage Interior Design.

"A car collector might want to park in a garage every day to protect their investments, but I store my wine in my garage," he said.

Raw concrete floors are out, frequently replaced by more versatile epoxy or modular rubber flooring, designers say.

"Clients want a floor that can be easily cleaned and mopped, like any other room in the house," Savage said.

And if the garage has windows, he includes window treatments that match those in other parts of the house. Storage units on wheels can be easily rearranged in a pinch, he says, and some garages include not just refrigerators but kitchenettes.

Margaret Mayfield, an architect living in Los Osos, California, keeps her washer and dryer in the garage, with most of the floor reserved as a workspace for refinishing furniture and other tinkering projects. Her family's three cars are parked in the driveway, never in the garage.



Art Gray/Sheri Koonas via AP

This undated photo taken in Santa Monica, Calif., shows a panelized house that was designed and built by Minarc, a prestigious company in southern California. The facade of the garage door, a focal point of the house, was created with scrap pieces of wood and left over quartz from the interior countertops. The house is featured in the book "prefabulous Small Houses" by Sheri Koonas.

"You're supposed to keep your cars in the garage, but I hardly know anyone who does," said David Hirsch, a partner at Urban Architectural Initiatives who splits his time between California and New York City.

"My neighbor uses his for woodworking projects, and my daughter uses hers

as a sort of casual space and playroom for the kids. And for deep storage. I guess that's another common use for garages," he said.

Even the carport Hirsch designed for his own Palo Alto, California, home — a steel framework over a gravel driveway — goes unused, he said.

Sheri Koonas, author of "Prefabulous Small Houses" (Taunton, 2016) and other books on home building, says garage doors are getting more attention these days.

"Individualizing a garage door makes the entire house look much more interesting," she said, citing a recently constructed house in Santa

Monica, California, where leftover strips of orange kitchen counter were used to build a striking and artistic garage door.

"They purchased a garage door without siding, laid it all out in the driveway and, using scraps from the construction, really made a gorgeous piece of art," she said. "They made it into so much more than just an ordinary garage door. It's the most beautiful garage door I've seen anybody do, and it adds so much to the look of the whole house."

Koonas also said there is greater demand now for good ventilation in garages, for built-in fittings to facilitate organization, and for garages that are separate from the rest of the house, as opposed to attached garages.

"The garage is such a useful and important space in American culture, and making optimal use of it is much cheaper and more convenient than renting an extra space somewhere," said Hirsch.

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