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PRIVATE PROPERTIES



By SARAH LIN

Willem Dafoe Lists Rubber-Clad House

Actor Willem Dafoe is seeking \$650,000 for his rubber-clad Modernist house in the Hudson Valley of upstate New York.

Willem Dafoe
Actor Willem Dafoe has been nominated for an Academy Award twice ("Patriot" in 1997, "Shadow of the Vampire" in 2000) and played the villainous Green Goblin in the "Spider-Man" series. The actor, who lives in Manhattan, bought the 2,200-square-foot house in 1988.

In 1988, choreographer Eugene Loring commissioned the house and had it designed to blend into the landscape. A thick skin of gray-black rubber was stretched over the wood-frame exterior to complement eight car-sized boulders on the property. The house has a man-made room used by Mr. Loring as a dance studio.

On 6.8 acres in Accord, a town just over 100 miles from New York City, the two-bedroom house overlooks a meadow and has a kitchen with a commercial stove, 2 1/2 baths and a tower room that can be used as an office.

"The house was really designed to work with the rocks," says listing agent Chris Pomeroy of Coldwell Banker Residential Properties. He adds, "It's extremely easy to maintain. You don't have to paint it."

New Mexico Estate Sale Tops \$15.5 Million

The 3,000-acre Santa Fe, N.M., estate of the late Richard L. Fisher, a New York real-estate developer and philanthropist, has sold for slightly more than its \$25.5 million asking price. It's one of the costliest modern-day purchases in the area in recent years.

Mr. Fisher, a senior partner at Manhattan development firm Fisher Brothers, died in 2006 of cancer at age 65. Together with his mother, he had bought and developed the New Mexico property known as Saddleback Ranch, in the early 1990s. The compound, set on rolling hills and meadows just outside Santa Fe, has four houses totaling 25,000 square feet of living space, plus stables, an equestrian center and a manmade pond.



An investor group from Seattle and Houston bought the property. One of the two main houses is contemporary (pictured above) with four bedrooms, four baths and a lap pool; the other is an adobe hacienda with six bedrooms, a French country kitchen and slate floors. The property comes with farm and ranch equipment including a surrey, 20 head of cattle and six horses.

Don and John DeVito of Santa Fe Properties, an affiliate of Christie's Great Estates, represented both buyer and seller.

Producer Revamps Cher's Old Place

After an earlier price cut, the owners of Cher's former Key Biscayne, Fla., house have made improvements and listed it at the original asking price of \$12.9 million.

The entertainer bought the waterfront property in 2003 and sold it to entrepreneur and film producer Sean Wolfington and his wife, Anna, for \$8.8 million in May 2006. They listed the six-bedroom, 7,300-square-foot house a month later but dropped the price to \$11.9 million in October 2006.

Mr. Wolfington, who produced the 2006 drama "Bellini," says he spent \$3 million on the house, adding among other things a remote-control system for home equipment and a dock. (The property comes with 100 feet of bay frontage.) He says he hasn't actively marketed the house in the interim. It's being sold furnished. "People only need to bring their toothbrush," he adds. Jorge E. Uribe of Sotheby's International Realty has the listing.



Why Libraries Are Back in Style

It's Not Because of Books; They're 'Memory Rooms' or TV-Free Private Spaces

By JUNE FLETCHER *

IN THE LIBRARY of her 5,800-square-foot house in Glen Cove, N.Y., Linda Tellefson keeps trophies from dog shows, needlepoint pillows of bulldogs and gold-framed photos of family. Though the plain-painted room has a scattering of books, she often retreats to it not just to read but to remember the dogs she used to breed, to nap, or to get away from the TV. "It's my veg-out room," Ms. Tellefson says.

Reading rates are down and Americans say they love easier living. And yes, one of the most popular rooms in big new houses is a library. Rather than being about books, their appeal is often about creating a certain ambience. "Libraries connote elegance and quality," says New York architect and interior designer Camille Platé, adding that most of her wealthy clients want one, even if they do most of their reading online.

Libraries have become so fashionable that this month, talk-show host Oprah Winfrey featured one in her Santa Barbara, Calif., home on the cover of her magazine; it contains first editions collected for her by a rare-book dealer. In the latest annual National Association of Home Builders consumer survey, 63% of home buyers said they wanted a library or considered one essential, a percentage that has been edging up for the past few years. Many mass-market home builders are including libraries in their house plans, sometimes with retro touches like rolling ladders and circular stairs.

Jeanne Ziering, an interior designer in Massapequa, N.Y., says the newfound popularity of libraries is part of a general movement toward traditional design and decor. "When the economy turns bad, people turn to the classics," she says. Libraries are especially appealing during anxious times because they project coziness and comfort, she adds.

What can make libraries more soothing than other formal rooms? It's not much books but the framed family photographs, awards and mementos that share the shelves and define a family's interests and identity, says McLean, Va., architect Chris Lessard. "They're memory rooms," he says. Because libraries are public rooms, oftentimes the books are purely decorative and don't say as much about the family who lives there. The books that people really read, like paperback novels and how-to guides, often



are kept out of sight elsewhere in the home.

Even in a downturn, U.S. adult hardcover and paperback book sales reached \$36.6 billion last year, a slight increase from the year before, according to the Book Industry Study Group, a New York trade group. But demand is down, and the Web has changed the way to the National Endowment for the Arts. 5% of Americans said they read literature in 2002, the latest survey data available, down from 34% in 1992.

HIS AND HERS LIBRARIES

Still, some homeowners are book lovers. Michael Burkitt and his wife, Roberta, own an estimated 8,000 books, all hardbound, which they keep in two formal libraries in their new, 5,800-square-foot home in Reno, Nev., and their 3,800-square-foot vacation house in Newport Coast, Calif. Mr. Burkitt, 65, the recently retired co-owner of a structural-plastics firm, says he's been too busy working most of his life to read even a fraction of them, but he enjoys relaxing among them in what he considers his "sanctuary"—one paneled in dark wood, the other in white—free from distractions like computers. "They're the womb of my home," he says.



Top, Linda Tellefson relaxes in her Glen Cove, N.Y., library; center, the Hampton Library in a Toll Brothers model home; left, one of two home libraries of Michael Burkitt.

Tucson, Ariz., interior designer Terri Taylor says she spends a lot of time scouring flea markets and bookstores for books with fancy bindings for her clients' bookshelves. She selects books to match color schemes rather than for their content. She once was ecstatic to find a stash of beautiful, leather-bound books at the bargain price of \$20 apiece—never mind that they were written in German, a language her clients didn't read. "I bought cases of them," she says.

For home builders who are scaling back the size of houses to make them more affordable and cheaper to construct, libraries are a more functional way to create an upscale look than the "old, craggy massive fours and 'Gone With the Wind' staircase," that characterized houses a few years ago, says Memphis, Tenn., architect Carson Loomis.

In some master-builder's plans, libraries are replacing dens, which have become redundant in the age of huge family rooms. A home plan called the Monterey Mediterranean offered by Toll Brothers, of Horsham, Pa., has 5,813 square feet, and includes a family room and a library with double glass doors off the foyer—but has no den. Neither does the 4,289-square-foot Blue Harbor Plan 4 house that John Laing Homes of Irvine, Calif., sells for nearly \$1.3 million in San Juan Capistrano, Calif. In addition to a wine room and a family room with fireplace, it puts a library on a landing between the first and second floors, which allows the ceiling height to be extended for more bookshelf space.

Of course, setting built-in bookshelves is a way for builders to pump up their bottom lines, especially if buyers choose custom-made shelving in exotic woods. About half the clients of London Bay, a Naples, Fla., builder whose prices start at just under \$1 million, order such upgrades, at a cost ranging from \$30,000 to \$300,000. Lately, says Mark Wilson, the builder's chief executive officer and president, there's even demand for "his and hers" libraries for spouses who like to keep their books, collections and alone-time separate.

JAY MCINERNEY'S PHILOSOPHY

Some builders are also creating mini-libraries scattered throughout the house. Popular spots are under the stairs, in lofts, in alcoves near master bedrooms and along entry hallways. Gary Stefaniuk, senior executive vice president of Orleans Homebuilders in Benavent, Pa., says that for the past few years, he's seen demand for bookcases in children's playrooms, since kids often have more books, trophies and collections than their parents do. "They want to display them in their own space," he says.

Dan Poag, a shopping-center developer, is putting a dedicated library and built-in bookcases in nearly every room of the 30,000-square-foot house he's building in Memphis. He doesn't know how many books he owns—he estimates several thousand—but has lost nearly everything he's purchased since college, as well as his three grown sons' college textbooks, a collection of science fiction, and children's books that his five grandchildren read when they visit. Since nearly every wall of his current house is filled with books, his decorator urged him to re-cover them so their multi-colored spines wouldn't clash with the decor. He refused. "The books are my priority," he says.

Similarly, author Jay McInerney and his wife, Anne Hearst, happily mix dog-eared paperbacks with first editions of Fitzgerald and Joyce in the overstocked bookcases of both their Manhattan apartment and their Hamptons house. Mr. McInerney thinks the visual jumble of thousands of mismatched books is appealing. "If you're not reading what's on your bookshelves, you should find something else to decorate with," he says.

Centuries-Old Tuscany

What: 23-acre estate with 18th-century Tuscan villa of 36,000 square feet with 12 bedrooms.

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

