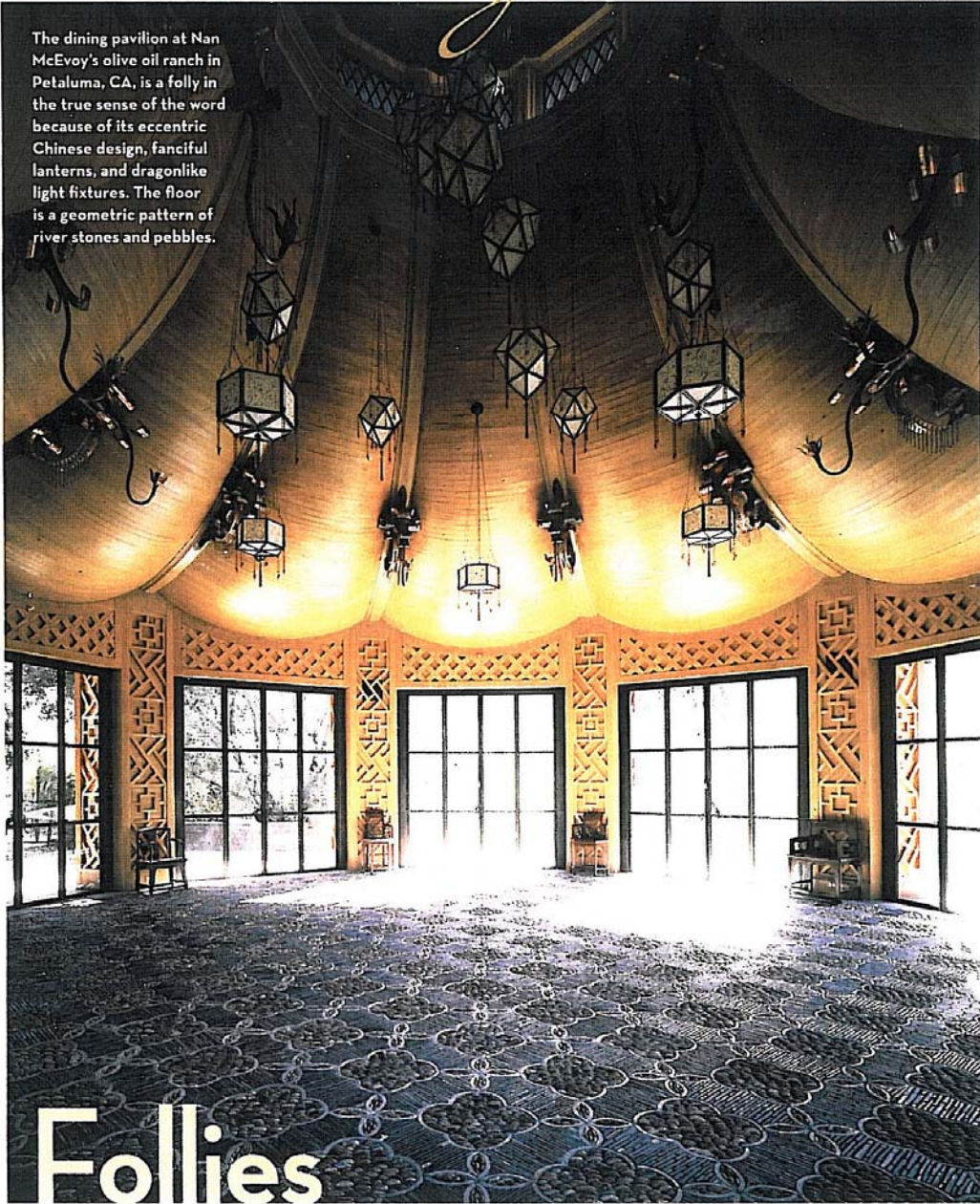


HOUSE & GARDEN

in the garden

The dining pavilion at Nan McEvoy's olive oil ranch in Petaluma, CA, is a folly in the true sense of the word because of its eccentric Chinese design, fanciful lanterns, and dragonlike light fixtures. The floor is a geometric pattern of river stones and pebbles.



Follies

THE CHARMING, OFTEN ECCENTRIC ORNAMENTS POPULAR IN 18TH-CENTURY GARDENS STILL HAVE A PLACE TODAY *by stephen orr*

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARION BRENNER

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in the garden

EYE-POPPING CHINOISERIE WITH A DASH OF AMERICAN WIT, THIS STUNNING DINING PAVILION IS ALSO REMARKABLY USEFUL

Follies are not the useless extravaganzas that their name might imply. A well-placed one leads the eye to a prescribed view. These fanciful structures can also be utilitarian. At her ranch in Petaluma, California, Nan McEvoy noticed visitors trying to shield themselves from the sun with large garden hats, so she decided to make a sun hat on a grand scale: a dining pavilion.

San Francisco designer Michael Booth's creation, with an exaggerated swooping roof and a lattice-work exterior, was inspired by McEvoy's trips to Chinese gardens. With the addition of a real coup de théâtre, gigantic copper lizards that chase each other up the roof, it became a true folly with historical precedence.

Follies reached their height of popularity in eighteenth-century English landscape, or picturesque, gardens. They relied on carefully edited compositions that were inspired by and sometime mimicked the landscape paintings of artists such as Poussin and Lorrain. Follies were focal points and gave a sense of wonder or mystery. A faked classical ruin bestowed the aura of history; an exotic pagoda denoted the owner's worldliness. Some follies served as dining rooms or dairies. Excesses followed, with gardens that resembled today's theme parks, jammed with cultural motifs.

In 1780, tastemaker Horace Walpole wrote, "The Palladian bridge, the Gothic ruin, the Chinese pagoda, that surprise the

stranger, soon lose their charms to their surfeited master." But one good folly can continue to inspire. Several years on, McEvoy's pavilion "has a magic pull," she says. "I thought it would be just for parties, but it turned out to be something more." A straw hat or a gazebo could never compete. ▷

The folly at the McEvoy ranch was designed as a shady spot for large and small dinner parties. The pavilion, which sits some distance from the main house, was created by San Francisco designer Michael Booth. The monumental copper lizards, mascots of the ranch, were made in Vermont.