

infashion

Hill designers have 'Appeal'

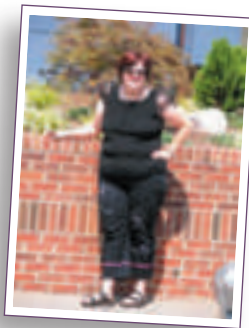
One lucky Columbia Heights home gets a re-do by a pair of Hill-based designers for a popular home improvement network show

BY CELESTE MCCALL

Capitol Hill designers are making national news. On Aug. 15, HGTV's immensely popular "Curb Appeal" is showcasing Barracks Row proprietors Chris Alvear and Francisco Pliego of Alvear Studio Design & Imports.

The pair helped execute an "ultimate makeover" for the red-brick row house of Fritz Faerber and Brit Lopez in Columbia Heights.

And creating the home's pocket-size front yard garden is landscape designer Julie Olson, owner of Serendipity Garden Design.



"Curb Appeal" is a lively, 30-minute reality show that depicts various designers spiffing up exteriors of homes all around the country. "Curb Appeal"

airs at 9:30 p.m. on Tuesdays.

"A friend told us they were taping the show, so we went downtown for an audition," Pliego said. "Out of 100 [applicants], they chose us along with about

20 other designers. Taping began about a year ago and we did it in about nine sequences over a period of several months. All that footage was edited down into the segment's 19-minutes (plus commercial breaks)."

The chosen designers completely redid the front of the narrow, Federal-style dwelling and added dramatic copper roofing. They also re-pointed exposed brick, added sprightly blue slate front steps — set off by a blue banister — leading up to the front porch.

Arranged vertically, the numerals of the street address were painstakingly painted in copper and silver leaf.

The result — which complements the roof's copper shingles — is stunning. "We wanted to add orange accents, but the clients said no," Pliego added.

After being picked for the gig, the pair suggested Olson for the yard design.

For the tiny 9-by-9-foot front yard, Olson created "a clean, simple, low-to-no-maintenance garden."

As the yard's centerpiece, she chose a young Japanese weeping maple, surrounded by lime-green liriopie (also known as border grass), which camouflages an unsightly fence. The plants came from Capitol Hill's Ginkgo Gardens and Merrifield Garden Center in Fairfax.

"The garden, especially the liriopie plants, came out well," Olson said. "They have nice coloration."

Specializing in small urban plots, Olson's firm has created gardens all over the Washington area. Serendipity's Capitol Hill projects include the charming back patio at Tapatinis on Barracks Row.

Most materials for the televised residential facelift were donated,

FROM THE SOURCE

Alvear Studio Design & Imports, 705 Eighth St., SE, (202) 546-8434.

Serendipity Garden Design, 320 G St., SE., (202) 544-7247.



PHOTO BY JULIE OLSON

The rowhouse before designers Alvear and Pliego executed their makeover.

while a few items were deeply discounted. Pliego and Olson's artistic know-how and elbow grease were practically free as well.

"What can we say?" laughed Pliego, as we surveyed the home's refurbished facade. "We're screen stars now!"

Asked if he and partner Chris Alvear would repeat the fun but time-consuming project, he responded promptly: "No. It was a great experience but we would never do it again."

VOICE



PHOTO BY CELESTE MCCALL

A Japanese weeping maple completes the design of the updated front yard.



PHOTO BY CELESTE MCCALL

Francisco Pliego of Alvear Studio was one of the designers showcased on HGTV's 'Curb Appeal' when the show visited a Columbia Heights home last year. He was joined on the project by landscape designer Julie Olson, above.