



# An Interior

AS SEEN IN  
**SFC&G**  
San Francisco Cottages and Gardens

**Green Scene** Succulents such as hens and chicks (THIS PAGE) add permanent bright spots in the garden. **A Storied Life** In the dining room, the walnut table and chairs are by Sir Edwin Lutyens. Curiosities, including a Han Dynasty cow and tiger, line the shelves. (OPPOSITE PAGE). See Resources.

Design icon Paul Vincent Wiseman celebrates a life in design and the debut of his first book

BY LINDA O'KEEFFE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN MERKL

# Journey







*“When a room tells our life story and reflects who we are, it gives us license to open up to our true self.”*

says interior designer Paul Wiseman, by way of explaining the philosophy behind *Inner Spaces* (Gibbs Smith, 2014), the first monograph of his stellar 35-year career. Embodying Wiseman’s own encyclopedic design knowledge, the homes in the book brim with historical references and rich, customized detail. “Whenever there’s a confluence of the décor, the architecture and the landscape, a project sings; it becomes a psychological experience,” he says.

A case in point is the serene Belvedere weekend cottage he shares with his partner, Richard Snyder. “Spa Belvedere,” as Wiseman likes to call it, showcases his personal preference for rooms clad in shades of white. “A neutral environment calms me. It enables me to work with color all day,” he says. Built more than a century ago, the home’s rumored architect, Julia Morgan, would surely approve of Wiseman’s recent renovation. Nestled into the crest of a hill on its original footprint, the house now features bronze casement windows, a zinc roof and a limestone façade that will eventually acquire their own weathered patinas until all signs of intervention are undetectable. Wiseman’s “Bosphorous influence” accounts for a proliferation of daybeds, sofas and window seats. “Conscious lounging is a respected pastime in every culture I’m drawn to,” he says, “and a characteristic of any good host is the desire to make everyone who enters feel supremely relaxed.”



**Simple Pleasures** Spaces for reflection dot the terraced garden (LEFT), which offers long, unobstructed views from the hilltop property. Wiseman’s first book (RIGHT) is *Inner Spaces* (Gibbs Smith, 2014). In the living room (OPPOSITE PAGE), a portrait of a young Igor Stravinsky overlooks a 17th-century fireplace surround. Fireplace screens and accessories are by Tuell + Reynolds. See *Resources*.







**F**or a dinner celebrating the launch of his book, Wiseman prepared a pear pie from his mother's recipe, made with fruit gathered from his family's orchards the day before



**The Art Of Hosting**  
Wiseman prepares a homemade pear pie for guests including Eric Hughes, Lorissa Kimm, Sue Fisher King and Lisa Chadwick, who gathered at his weekend home.  
*See Resources.*







**Garden Party** (CLOCKWISE ACROSS SPREAD FROM OPPOSITE PAGE) Paul Wiseman heads to his garden for ingredients, including petite *fraises des bois*. A collection of hats in the courtyard. Succulents abound on the property. Fresh sorrel for the evening's dinner.







The property's terraced garden also registers as an extension of the home's restorative nature. Wiseman maintained its original plan, but winnowed spaces for contemplative pauses and added perches for taking in the stunning, unobstructed vistas: Sausalito and the Golden Gate Bridge are to the west; Angel Island and the Bay Bridge to the south. A long path meanders through tiered beds of aloes, multi-headed succulents and clumping, fan-shaped palms to Wiseman's herb garden, where he picks sorrel, *fraises des bois* and other delights for the leisurely Sunday afternoon lunches he often prepares for friends and clients.

Wiseman has a deep connection to the Northern California landscape, having grown up on a pear farm located between Sacramento and San Francisco, never imagining his name would someday appear on lists of the world's top decorators. (For a dinner celebrating the launch of his book, Wiseman prepared a pear pie from his mother's recipe, made with fruit gathered from his family's orchards the day before.) But Wiseman soon broadened his horizons, and travel at an impressionable age widened his stylistic appreciation. In the preface to *Immer Spaces*, he recalls turning 18 in Athens, 21 in Tasmania and 25 in Paris. Part of his ability to create aesthetically cohesive interiors stems from his unique distillation of several international inspirations, including the Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa's seamless marriage of indigenous crafts and modernism; Renzo Mongiardino's layered, stylized interiors; and architect Ricardo Legorreta's use of structural color to reduce space to its essence.

The sense of authenticity and appropriateness in Wiseman's work stems, too, from his sensitivity to the stories embedded in spaces and objects. "If I handle a ceramic Chinese pot that is thousands of years old, I see my short existence in a much broader reality, and I feel more fully human." ✨



**The Tasteful Kitchen** (CLOCKWISE ACROSS SPREAD FROM TOP LEFT) Paul Wiseman clips fresh herbs from his garden. The dinner begins with a beautiful heirloom tomato caprese salad. Friends around the table include (from bottom left) Brenda Mickel, Lisa Chadwick, James Hunter (standing), Lorissa Kimm, the host, Ned Mobley (standing), Sue Fisher King, Mauricio Munoz (standing) and Eric Hughes; dining chairs are by Munder-Skiles. Wiseman prepared the colorful main course with locally sourced ingredients. Brenda Mickel and Lorissa Kimm enjoy dessert al fresco. See Resources.

