

SPACES

SAN FRANCISCO | MARIN | NAPA | SONOMA

ANGLES OF REPOSE

AND THE VIRTUES OF
OPEN-PLAN LIVING



DESIGN SPARRING

WHEN BROTHERS WITH DIFFERENT STYLES COMPETE OVER ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS, EVERYBODY WINS.

BY EVA HAGBERG FISHER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW MILLMAN



“MY PORCH IS BETTER THAN YOUR PORCH,” the owner of this Jared Polsky- and Paul Wiseman-designed Kentfield house says to his brother, every chance he gets.

The reason it’s worth arguing over? His brother’s got a Robert A.M. Stern-designed porch, something that in any context would be highly covetable. So there’s a little bit of laid-back California versus historically inflected East Coast competition going on. But this is more than a West vs. East architecture fight. It’s a testament to *this* porch, the owner’s favorite part of this house, finished seven years ago but still feeling as fresh and inviting as the day the family first walked on it.





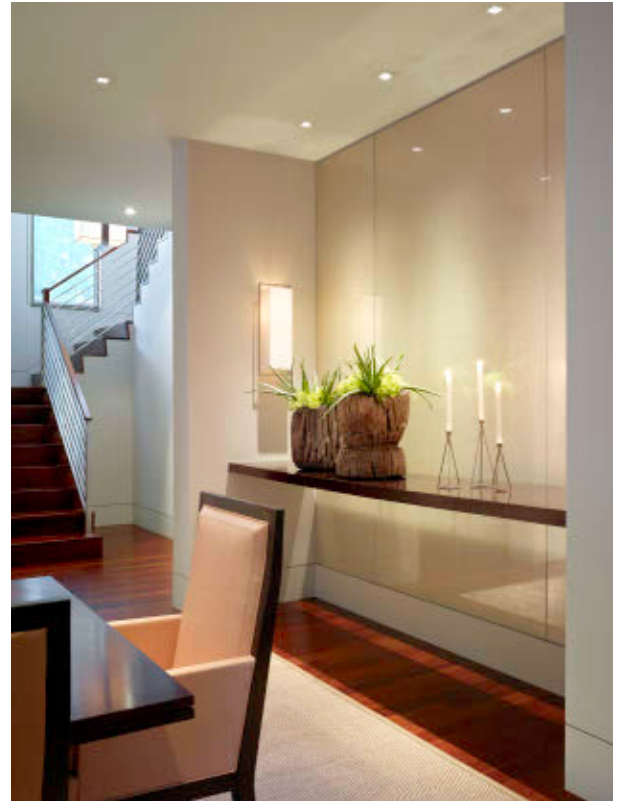
Opposite: A view from the back garden toward the rear exterior shows the Picket lounge chair by Summit. This image: In the family room, cushions covered in Jaipur fabric by Peter Fasano brighten up a warm custom sofa by A. Rudin, while a sconce by Hubbardton Forge illuminates the space; Picket lounge chairs reappear here, made luxurious by Janus et Cie fabric and placed in counterpoint to the custom coffee table with a concrete top custom-made by Concrete Works.





A narrow kitchen offers simple sophistication through the use of sustainable bamboo cabinetry and a richly colored hardwood floor; nestled into the kitchen island are Aro counter stools from Bernhardt. Right: The dining room leads into the central atrium-style stairwell, with luxuriously blocky chairs offering a sense of weight and seriousness.

“WE WANTED THE HOUSE TO BE **SOPHISTICATED** BUT NOT FANCY.”



“We wanted the house to be sophisticated but not fancy,” interior designer Paul Wiseman says. That description aptly reflects the West Coast design ethos, which comes through in the home’s bamboo kitchen — the first time the designer’s famed firm the Wiseman Group used bamboo as a kitchen product — as well as the cast-glass sink in the powder room (another technological advance, which Wiseman is now using in a Los Angeles project), along with the cantilevered shelf-like solid redwood buffet in the dining room and even the cast-concrete kitchen countertops made by Concrete Works in Berkeley.

It might seem from that list of materials that the look is rugged, more ’70s throwback Berkeley than the modernist chic currently in vogue in the Bay Area, but what Wiseman has done is use these surprising materials in a formal way, creating an unfussy, elegant style. “What we were looking to do was build a more contemporary house but with traditional references,” the owner says. “A softened contemporary house, with beautiful warm fabrics.”



It's that mix of tradition and a soft touch that led the homeowners, who have been involved with the San Francisco Design Center for decades, to choose the San Francisco-based Wiseman Group, founded by Wiseman 39 years ago and now with a team of 36 doing work "from Cambodia to Cape Town," as Wiseman says by phone from his Dogpatch office. The company has its own in-house architecture firm, an unusual move in a world where architects and interior designers are often thrown together and asked to play nice. For this house, Wiseman was more than happy to collaborate with architect Polsky, as was senior designer (and former Wiseman firm member) Martin Young, the essential partner on the project, who now heads Martin Young Design.

A highlight of the home is the three-story chandelier that hangs from the center of the atrium, itself a sleekly outfitted mix of contemporary shapes and ecologically friendly materials (it was important to the clients that the house be



Opposite: In the living room, a tripod floor lamp from Phoenix Day casts light over a Villa sofa by Holly Hunt, Barbara Barry lounge chairs, and a custom wedge end table by Peter Alexander. This page from top: A three-story custom light fixture designed by the Wiseman Group brings a streamlined work of art to the atrium by day and a warm glow by night; next to the family room, a breakfast nook is furnished with a Kella dining table by Troscan and Zele Emile chairs.



Top: In the main bedroom, a nightstand by A. Rudin sits next to a Soho upholstered bed by Headboard detailed with bed pillow fabrics by Lulan Artisans. In the foreground, a Dupre Lafon ottoman and an armchair by Mattiliano. **Bottom:** The upstairs landing becomes a private art gallery through the installation of a custom photo gallery by Cadre. Opposite: The iconic Kartell Louis Ghost armchair from Design Within Reach brings a pop of postmodernism to this brightly colored main bath illuminated by custom pendants designed by TWG and fabricated through Phoenix Day.



designed and built as sustainably as possible, a goal their design business connections helped facilitate). Another is the new layout, particularly the third floor, which was transformed into an office and poolroom, and the lower level, where Wiseman expanded the kitchen and family room and incorporated them into one big area.

“I’ve been around design for 25 years and yet grew up in a very small, very [aesthetically] conservative house,” the owner says. So despite decades of acquaintance with the industry itself, the couple underwent a steep learning curve as actual consumers of design: “We didn’t have any personal experience.”

And how is it now, having learned so much? “We kind of take [the house] for granted,” the owner says. They’ve been living in their Wiseman-designed house for seven years, after all. Sometimes it’s the owner’s brother who’ll remind them how amazing their porch — and the rest of the house — is. And sometimes it’s just random visitors who, as the owner says, will “come into the house and say ‘Whoa!’” For now, West Coast wins. ■

