

# OPENING ACT

AN UPDATED RANCH HOUSE IN MILL VALLEY IS MARKED BY A SIGNIFICANT ART COLLECTION, ICONIC FURNITURE AND A STRONG CONNECTION TO ITS DRAMATIC SURROUNDINGS.

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INTERIOR DESIGN Gary Hutton, Gary Hutton Design

ARCHITECTURE Jerome Buttrick, Buttrick Projects Architecture + Design

HOME BUILDER James Cuttle, Cuttle Construction Company

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE John Merten, Studio Green Landscape Architecture, and Michael Bernsohn, Michael Bernsohn Landscapes

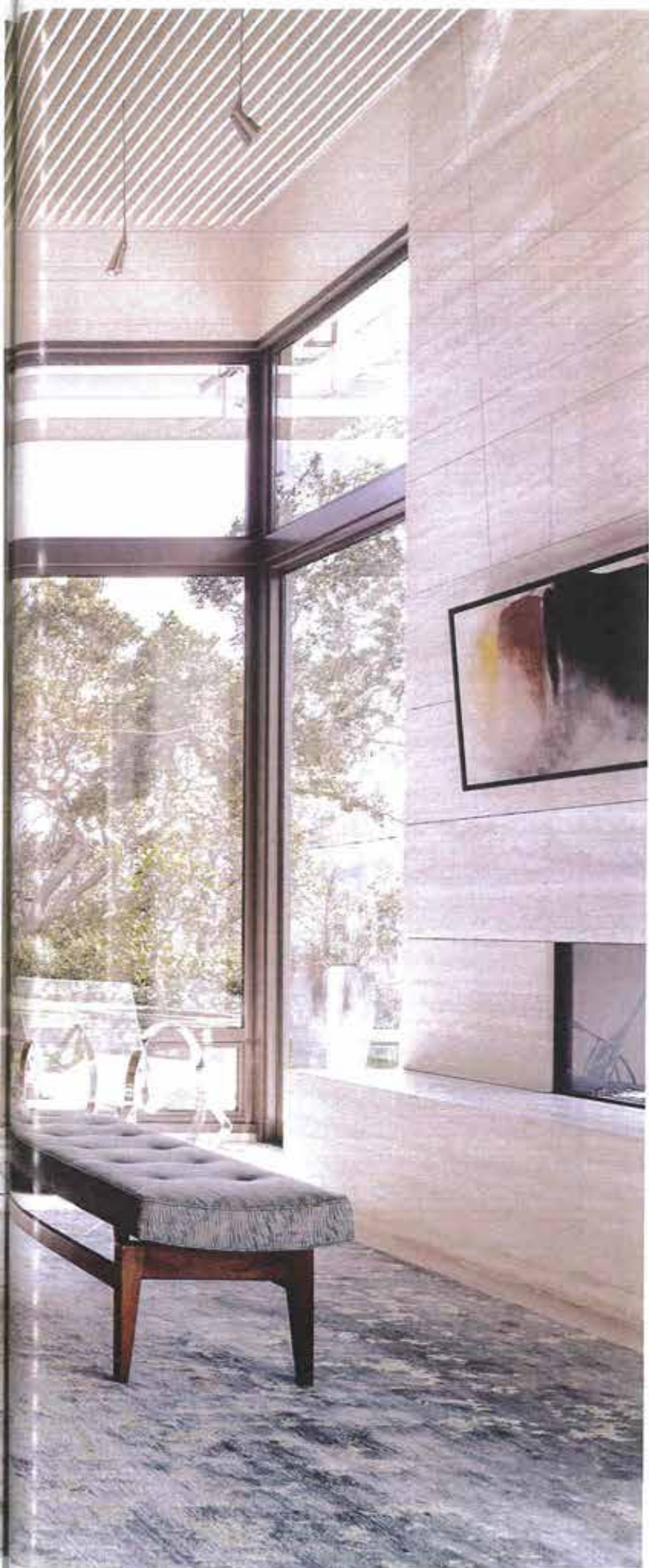
BEDROOMS 3 | BATHROOMS 3 | SQUARE FEET 3,240





For a Mill Valley house, designer Gary Hutton helped curate furnishings for his art collector clients. In the living room, *Eternity Domain*, 1989, by Jules Olitski hangs above a Jens Risom sofa covered with a striped Nobilis velvet. The wing chairs and a marble-topped coffee table are by Gio Ponti, and the bamboo-silk rug is by Niba Rug Collections.





There are some things you never forget. And for a couple who moved from Northern California to Texas and back to Northern California, Marin County is one of those things. "I worked with them once before," says designer Gary Hutton, who recently helped the avid collectors of art and objects furnish their newest home. "When they came back and got in touch, the wife told me they'd lived in Texas for exactly seven years, two months, one week, and three days."

Upon their long-awaited return to the Bay Area, the couple discovered a midcentury ranch-style house in Mill Valley. "It sits on an oak knoll on the middle ridge of Mount Tamalpais," the wife says. "You step outside and see wilderness." The lot was ideal, but the structure itself was less than perfect. The house had very few windows that took advantage of the site's 270-degree views. "We wanted something open and full of light," she adds.

With Hutton in mind as their designer, the couple met Jerome Buttrick and knew they had found their architect. "The house's lack of views didn't make sense given the landscape," says Buttrick, who also understood the couple's request for a large room off the kitchen, for casual meals, a study and ways to display their collections. He maintained but modified the boomerang floor plan and kept a guest room but otherwise did a complete rebuild, reorganizing rooms and expanding the space with additions and bump-outs.



*Diana*, from Robert Natkin's *Apollo* series, hangs in the hallway, which features custom-colored quarter-sawn white-oak flooring by Tree Lovers Floors. A partial low wall made of Caesarstone sections the living room from the entry.





CONTINUED FROM PAGE 255

Glass walls and corners mark an expanded voluminous living room, which features a museum-quality display of the couple's Pueblo pottery from circa 1880 to 1915. Inspired by Marcel Breuer's design for the Whitney Museum of American Art, Buttrick designed windows in the study and detached garage that look toward each other, and he then encased a portion of the master bedroom in a glass cantilever. "It's as if you're sleeping in a big oak tree," he says. Builder James Cuttle, who carried out the renovation, oversaw the application of the sophisticated palette of materials, including the dynamic pillowed cedar. "In over 25 years of building, this is as close as I've come to achieving the perfect house," he says. "The architect, subcontractors and engineers all gave great attention to detail."

For the kitchen cabinetry, fabricated by Feist Cabinets & Woodworks, Hutton stained quarter-sawn oak two shades darker than the hue of the floors. Milo Baughman-designed chrome stools with cushions covered with pony hair pull up to an island topped with honed silver travertine.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 257

Hutton acted as a master curator, helping his clients select mostly American and European vintage furniture pieces that make design statements but don't compete with paintings by such artists as Jules Olitski and Friedel Dzubas. He worked with Charles LaBrecque, a lead designer in his firm, and chose fabrics that lend warmth, color and interest. "These collectors don't distinguish between beautifully made everyday objects and fine art," Hutton says. "Their enthusiasm for furnishings was extraordinary." The husband found a pair of Gio Ponti-designed wing chairs and a marble-topped coffee table from the Parco dei Principi Grand Hotel in Rome for the living room, where a Jens Risom sofa and a bench, which is covered with a Fortuny fabric, complete the grouping.

To add more connection between the home and its landscape, Hutton developed stains the color of driftwood for the oak floors and the kitchen cabinetry, and suggested *shou sugi ban*, a Japanese wood-burning

Architect Jerome Buttrick remodeled the structure by reconfiguring the walls and designing additions. Pillowed-cedar siding enlivens the walls and bifolding glass doors open to a courtyard with hardscaping designed by landscape architect John Merten.





Set off by Benjamin Moore's Lush, a collection of 19<sup>th</sup>-century French majolica plates provide a backdrop in the breakfast area for the owners' vintage walnut-topped oval table designed by Florence Knoll and Kurt Ostervig-designed rosewood butterfly chairs. The cushion fabric is by Maharam.





Adding a touch of color to the master room, vintage teak chairs by Finn are upholstered with red leather. The perch in the room's glass-cornered overhang, which imparts a tree house feel to the space.





Above: Buttrick designed an aluminum sunshade for the exterior of the expanded living room. Merten bordered the drive with a limestone wall. Left: Landscape designer Michael Bernsohn chose *Aloe plicatilis* for a terrace off the living room; Richard Schultz furniture surrounds the fire pit.





Custom-colored bamboo-and-wool rug by Niba Rug Collections lends texture to the master bedroom. The vintage lighting fixture is by Fontana Arte, and the draperies were specified by Fabric Walls with a black and white textile. A Nigerian textile adorns the bed.





CONTINUED FROM PAGE 258

technique for the pivot front door. Quartzite paving grounds the entry and continues outside into the courtyard designed by landscape architect John Merten, who handled all of the hardscaping.

"There's a terrace with a fire pit off the living room so you can flow inside and out," Merten says. "It has a glass rail so as not to obstruct the view." Landscape designer Michael Bernsohn chose plantings to create gardens based on the house's shifting geometry. "Some areas are fantastical and some attract hummingbirds and butterflies," Bernsohn says of the layered and surprising plant material. "I did a succulent collection that's grounded by *Aloe bainesii* trees I'd seen in South Africa. It's insanely sculptural. You have to catch your breath when you walk in." **L**

A horizontal window in the master bath floods the area with light. Buttrick used pillowed-cedar siding for the walls, bringing the outside material in. Plants dot the cedar and provide a lush quality. The stainless-steel tub was designed by the owners and made by Diamond Spas in Colorado.