

Architecture

Mod House, Mod Art:
An Eichler becomes a showcase

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Lester Garnier ever be solved?





EICHLER REDUX

Designer Gary Hutton revives a Belvedere landmark for an art collector

I was looking for a house on the water for the freedom it implies," says art collector and SFMOMA patron Chara Schreyer, who chanced upon such a house overlooking the lagoon in Belvedere.

It is one of the very few custom homes that A. Quincy Jones designed for developer Joseph Eichler, better known for his prefabricated buildings in the Bay Area that are now eagerly sought after by architecture buffs.

But for Schreyer, the open floor plan, clerestory windows, characteristic peaked Eichler roof and large plate-glass walls were just part of the allure. "My father is a developer, and he and Eichler were great friends," she says. "I grew up in such homes in Los Angeles."

Eichler's mass-produced 1950s structures by Jones' firm and Anshen + Allen caught the imagination of postwar homeowners who wanted technologically advanced structures suited to indoor-outdoor living in California.

But Eichler homes have not always aged well. The in-floor radiant heating often fails, the open kitchens with laminated surfaces have tended to fall apart; and handsome as their single-pane plate-glass windows are, they offer poor insulation. Schreyer realized that she, too, would have to remodel her Eichler to make it comfortable.

"The previous owners ruined the house. They had no idea what it was. They had changed the character by adding [multi-paned] Pella windows," says Schreyer, aghast. Even the signature fireplace had been covered over with sheetrock.



Fortuitously, 1963 architectural drawings of the house by Jones' firm Emmons and Jones were available for reference.

"I reassured the neighbors I wanted to rescue the one-story house," says Schreyer, who set about setting things right. In one instance, she closed off the den that had been opened to the living room by former owners. When it was all finished, she even tried to get the house landmark status so future owners could not alter it again.

With much of the 2,100-square-foot house returned to its original form, Schreyer added some new details in the spirit of Eichler.

Architect Craig Hudson helped to incorporate new heating ducts and electrical systems within the roof, which was imperceptibly raised.

"Corian and Bisazza tile would not have been used when the house was built only because they didn't exist," says Schreyer. But these materials have the mass-produced virtues that Eichler loved to promote.

Rugs designed in 1946 by Raymond Lowey and reissued by Edward Fields were picked by San Francisco interior designer Gary Hutton to complement the architectural landmark. Lowey, too, was a kind of landmark: He designed contemporary luxury carpets, the Coca-Cola label and the PanAm logo, all quintessentially American icons. Florence Knoll couches, George Nelson's 1950s marshmallow sofa and Hans Wegner's coffee table are mixed with contemporary designs by Hutton, Daven Joy and Chris Deam as respectful markers of an era when Emmons and Jones' aesthetic thrived.

Still, the overall result is not a stilted, dusty restoration because the Eichleresque house was purchased



Facing page: Gary Hutton added a lacquered red Dutch front door to accent an otherwise neutral palette. The open-plan living space provides access to the back garden. This page: rear view of the living space dominated by a 1962 Larry Rivers painting; by day, new double-plate glass floor-to-ceiling windows let in light and blur boundaries between inside and out.



Above: In the den, an Eames game table is ready for hardscrabble; above it, a paper sculpture by Liz Larner. Eames walnut table beside an upholstered chair by Carlo Mollino. Right: Mahogany cabinetry and warm cork floors echo the '60s, when those materials were popular. All painted wood ceilings are original. New sofa by Marco, and on the wall, a large painting on canvas by Keith Tyson.

as a sort of museum wing to display art from the 1960s and '70s. Schreyer's collection, a Who's Who of modern and contemporary art and artwork by Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Diane Arbus, Donald Judd and Ed Ruscha vivifies her world.

Born in Munchberg Uber Franken near Heidelberg, Germany, Schreyer now returns to shows such as Documenta as a collector. "I have work by Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke and Eva Hesse, but I did a lot of research first to see if they were involved in the Nazi movement," says Schreyer.

"My parents are Holocaust survivors," she says, offering another insight into the way she likes to gather and display her collection. "I actually collect art psychoanalytically."

By linking art and architecture to the period they were made in, "The art can have a 'dialogue' with the houses they are in," says Schreyer. "I eventually want to do a virtual reality museum of my houses so anyone can walk through them and see that."

Schreyer, who has three homes, says, "To be honest, you can eat with only one spoon at a time." But perhaps each house represents an era of freedom for her family. "It is not about sleeping in so many different places," she says. "It is about collecting work by people who have positively changed the course of history." ♦

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