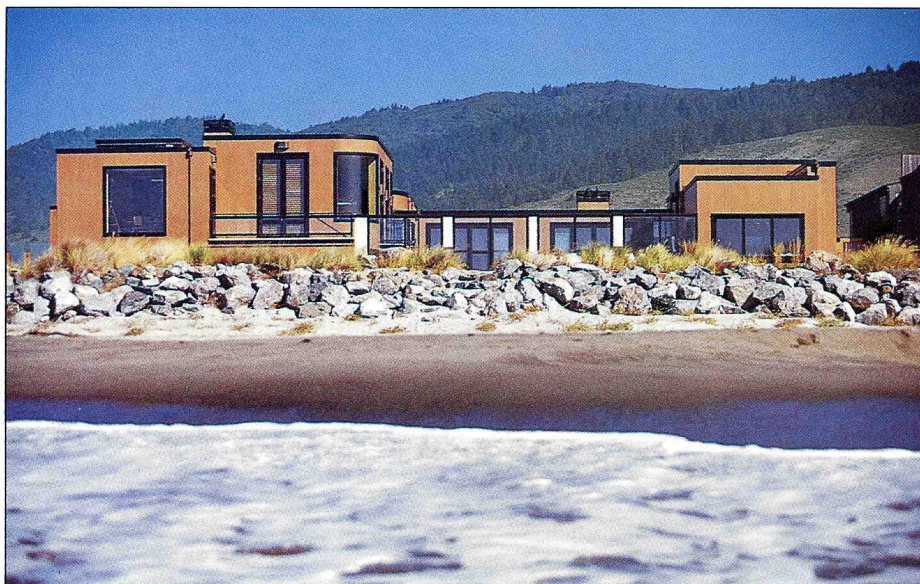


ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF INTERIOR DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

JULY 2000



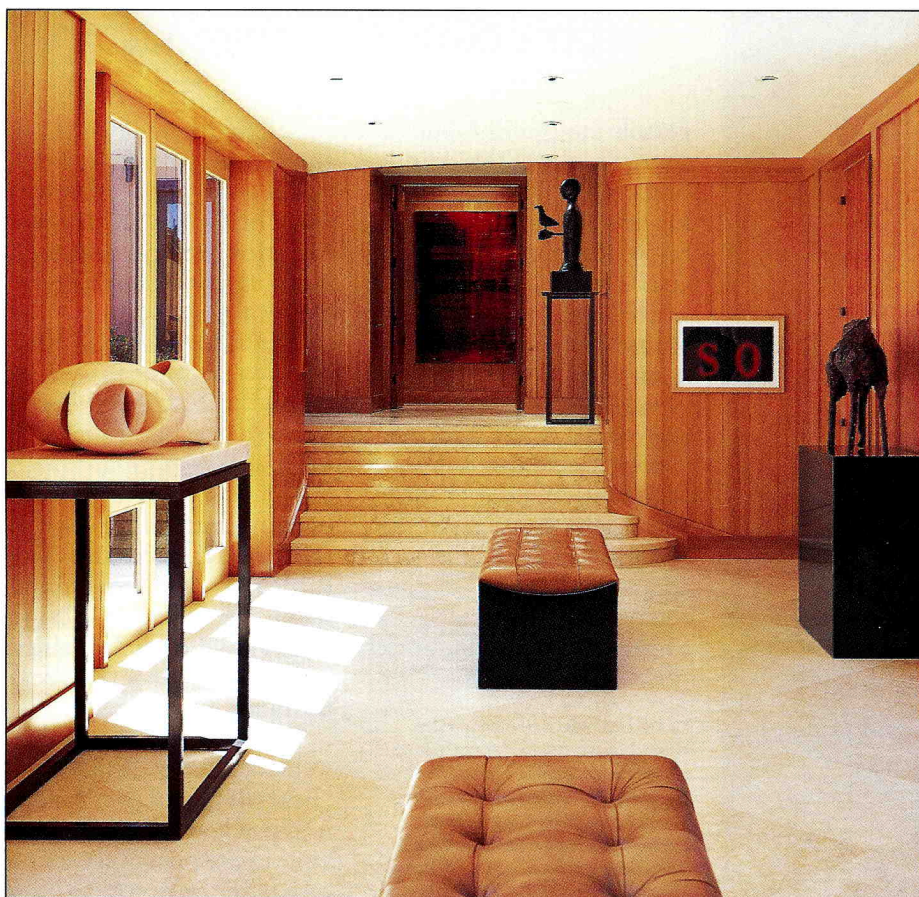


LEFT: Modernist lines and a cedar façade define a house Walker & Moody Architects built in Stinson Beach, California, for San Francisco art collectors. BELOW LEFT: Designer Sally Sirkin Lewis created a gallery-like entrance hall for such works as *3 Rings* by Henry Moore.

REIMAGINING STINSON BEACH

CONTEMPORARY ART AND ARCHITECTURE DEFINE A NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HOUSE

*Architecture by Walker & Moody/Interior Design by Sally Sirkin Lewis
Text by Penelope Rowlands/Photography by Tim Street-Porter*



You don't really need much else but the art and the ocean," Los Angeles designer Sally Sirkin Lewis told her clients, avid art collectors with a house on Stinson Beach, just north of San Francisco. They were after something different—"something cosmopolitan," Lewis says—a place that would showcase their collection of modern art without being overshadowed by it. "Our main desire was to have a house at the beach, but not a beach house," says the husband. They also wanted to acknowledge their exceptional surroundings.

Their Marin County weekend house is sandwiched between a stretch of the Pacific and Mount Tamalpais. Designed by Sandy Walker, of Walker & Moody Architects in San Francisco, it takes full advantage of the beauty around it, with generous windows on all sides. The architect conceived the house as a U, "one that's built around the swimming pool," Walker says. "It very much defined itself that way." The shape had another advantage, explains the husband: "It was a good way of utilizing the lot without making the house too massive." The asymmetrical exterior detailing of the wings—corners are rounded in one

RIGHT: Walls in the living room were paneled in hemlock. "It was important that the colors, fabrics and woods be cohesive, so I used neutral tones," says Lewis, who designed most of the furnishings, including the curved banquette, for her company, J. Robert Scott.





MAPPLETHORPE
ROY LICHENSTEIN
Warhol Zeichnungen 1962 - 1967

Richard Serra Sculpture 1961-1976 The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
HENRY MOORE by John Hodge
BOTERO THE BULLFIGHT

Alexander Calder 1898-1976
The Century
Robert Rauschenberg

DRAWINGS 1961 RICHARD SERRA
PAUL STRAND
MARGARET BURKE-WHITNEY
max ernst



wing, squared off in the other—pleased the clients. “We didn’t want it to be perfect,” the husband says. “We wanted it to be a little different.” With gentle irony, the couple named it The Beachpad.

When it came to the interior design, the husband went straight to Lewis. “I’ve admired Sally’s work for twenty years,” he says. “She’s got a design sense I’ve never seen in anyone else. And she has a great modern art collection of her own. Her belief is that views and art should be the predominant features, more than furnishings. The setting is the main focus.”

Because art looms large in the couple’s lives, Lewis thought the house’s entrance hall should serve as a kind of gallery. To that end she banned consoles and other furniture, save for some leather-cushioned benches of her own design. (All the furniture in the house, except for the antiques, was created by Lewis for her firm, J. Robert Scott.) Artworks include *3 Rings*, a sensuous 1966 marble sculpture by Henry Moore, and Ed Ruscha’s 1989 graphite-on-paper *Metro, Petro, Neuro, Psycho*.

By choosing hemlock paneling—a wood that’s the color of wet sand—for most of the rooms, the couple, quite literally, set the interior’s tone. They wanted the furnishings to be mostly beige, echoing the hues of the beach. Lewis often includes black and other strong colors in her rooms, so refraining from doing so was a challenge, yet one she enjoyed. “I think it’s the first house I’ve

In the living room, before Ed Ruscha’s 1983 painting *Strength*, are two works by Alexander Calder. In the foreground is a sculpture by Anthony Caro; a Morris Louis painting hangs at left. Furniture, fabrics, leather and terra-cotta horse from J. Robert Scott. Hokanson carpet.

SUBTLETY RULES, AND IT TAKES A WHILE TO APPRECIATE THE VARIETY OF TEXTILES AND SURFACES ON DISPLAY.



ABOVE: "The clients have a wonderful collection of bronzes in the library, so I felt the fabrics and furniture could have deeper tones," Lewis says. Over the fireplace is a 1979 bronze relief by Roy Lichtenstein; to its right is a work by Max Ernst; the plate is by Picasso.

done with that kind of palette," she says.

First impressions to the contrary, there's actually a world of color in the living room, including mocha hassocks and leather chairs and the light copper shades of the sofa pillows. "I did like working with these colors," says Lewis. "I thought they were luscious. They looked to me like the colors of melons." Subtlety rules, and it takes a while to appreciate the variety of textiles and surfaces on display, from the butter-soft woven leather on the chairs to the two-and-a-quarter-inch-wide planks of the bleached-oak floors—a

width Lewis considers more interesting than conventional-size boards.

Although the living room is generously proportioned—it's thirty-six feet long—Lewis didn't rush to fill it. Quite the opposite. "How much furniture does one need? I don't love lots of furniture." She took clean-lined sofas and arranged them in the center of the room. "I always like to float furniture in a room," she notes. "I don't like it when you have things against the wall." From every seat, it seems, there's something beautiful to look at, including Morris Louis's 1959 *Capricorn Descent*, which hangs above the fireplace. True to form, she also incorporated Asian antiques into the design—including, in this room, an eighteenth-century Cambodian torso.

Fittingly, the living room's other main seating arrangement is focused on nature. "I

envision my clients sitting there in the evening, looking out over the ocean," Lewis says, referring to a corner where a curved banquette and cane-back chairs surround an ingenious round low table of her own design. This inventive piece "rises and has a larger top for chairs to pull up to for dining," she explains.

If the furniture there is reminiscent of that in the adjacent dining room, it's no coincidence: This slice of the living room is used to extend the other space for large parties. The dining room, too, is oriented around art, including a densely textural work on paper by Richard Serra, as well as *Here and Theirs*, a shimmering Robert Rauschenberg silk-screen-and-acid-wash on bronze. The most unusual element of the room is its retracting ceiling panel. This innovation—the architect's idea—was an inspiration to Lewis, who says, "I just love the thought of having the moonlight streaming onto the table and chairs."

While the clients are of one mind on the subject of art, their design preferences are another story. He favors sleek, modern lines. She describes herself as being from "an English-chintz-type background." In a house that inclines steeply toward the

RIGHT: Richard Serra's 1990 work *Reykjavik* dominates the dining room, which has a ceiling panel that retracts to reveal the sky "for magical dining," Lewis says. The table—which expands to seat 12—cane-back chairs and seat cushions are all from J. Robert Scott.





"It's soft, but it has strength and a sense of scale," Lewis says of a guest bedroom. J. Robert Scott chairs and table; Hokanson carpet. OPPOSITE: "The master bedroom reflects the clients' contemporary yet classic sense of style." Hinson-Hansen swing-arm lamp; Hokanson carpet.





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contemporary, Lewis worked hard to keep the wife's tastes in mind. She tempered the prevailing modernity wherever she could, particularly in the furniture design. The chinoiserie detailing on the cane-back chairs in the living room provides an example: "I thought the chinoiserie gave her a taste of both worlds," Lewis says. Similarly, in the master bedroom, Lewis added Old World touches—gold-leafed mirrors and a four-poster with gilt chinoiserie finials—to what is essentially a very up-to-the-minute look.

One room where Lewis did introduce her signature palette is the library. "I departed a bit in that room—it should be a retreat. There I could bring out a little black." She brought a casualness to it, too. "I didn't want it to be terribly high style. I wanted the sofa and chairs to be more comfy and not so streamlined." The camel-on-black pillows, in thick wool, were made after a carpet that was an accidental find. "I saw a rug hanging in a store window, and I went crazy for it," Lewis remembers. "I love the texture against the sleek lambskin leather of the sofa. To me the pillows were a confirmation of the clients' art sensibility."

The library's fauteuils were bought by the husband about twenty years ago from none other than J. Robert Scott. Lewis updated her own design by reupholstering them, "to put some of the classical tradition in with the contemporary," she says. Both traditions are also present in the

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The pool terrace is enclosed on three sides and protected from the beach by a glass partition punctuated by square columns. Sliding doors allow access to the beach. A bronze sculpture by Mimmo Paladino is on the left, across from a steel work by Alexander Liberman.

STINSON BEACH

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black-and-white-marble mantelpiece, which the designer purchased in London. "When I saw it, I screamed," she says. "It's so hard to get black Belgian marble." For all its postmodern lines, though, it's actually eighteenth-century Irish.

Lewis envisioned the guest bedrooms as either masculine or feminine. The latter—a small second-story room overlooking the pool—is mostly white and is dominated by a canopy bed. "I love to do draped beds in very tiny rooms," she says. "It takes away the look of tiny." Besides, she asks, "What more do you really need for a guest bedroom than a bed?" In the "masculine" guest bedroom—a larger space on the first floor—a very different sensibility is at work. There's an ebony bed, and there are black accents throughout.

This is the only room in the house that has mostly Asian art—in this case, nearly thirty pieces of Han Dynasty pottery acquired by Lewis for the clients. Arranging them was a chal-

The husband favors sleek, modern lines. The wife describes herself as being from "an English-chintz-type background."

lenge—"They were all sizes; it was like a jigsaw puzzle"—one she met, in part, by the strategic use of Lucite stands.

Both there and throughout the house, Asian pieces "soften the modern art and give it a depth," the wife points out. A perfect example of the symbiosis between the two can be found in her husband's dressing area, where a Robert Mapplethorpe image of flowers—"one of the largest formats he ever worked in," the husband says—is elegantly juxtaposed with the equally strict contours of two Han Dynasty terracotta pots. This is just a small corner of the house, but in its quiet way it sums up all the rooms. As the husband puts it: "It's all about the art." □

TROPICAL NEW YORK

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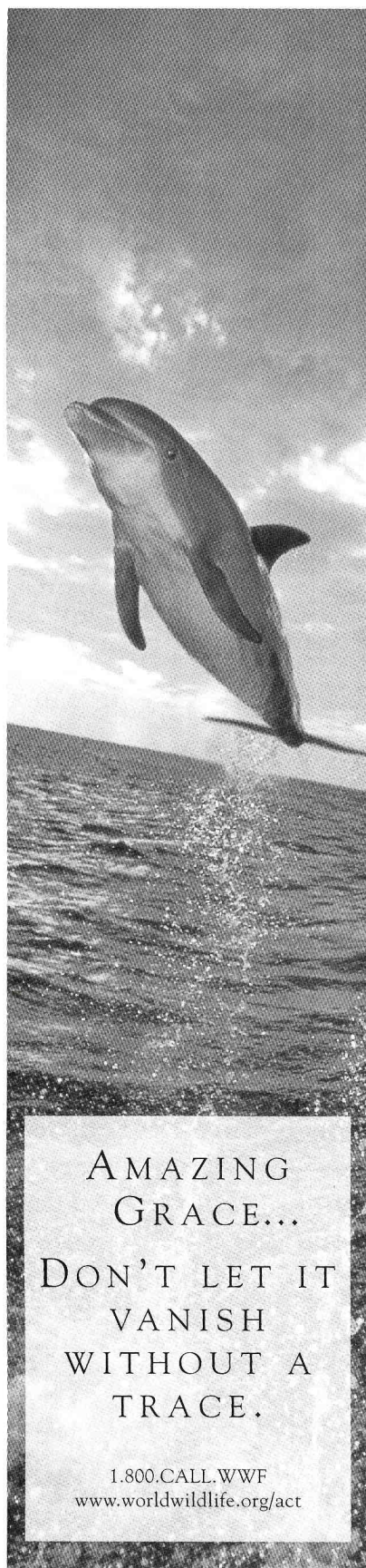
"The wallpaper scenes punch out the narrow rooms and give the illusion of more space," Connors notes. "Since lofts tend to be rather dark, I also used a lot of mirrors to reflect the light that pours in through the skylight and the French doors in the bedroom. I was inspired by Sir John Soane's Museum in London, where mirrors produce a similar effect."

Connors's painstaking attention to detail is evident throughout. A pale yellow hand-painted brick wall, with a distressed antique plaster effect executed by Toby Nuttall, extends the length of the loft and provides a soft backdrop for the richly grained antiques and the luxurious, colorful fabrics, selected by designer Karen Reisler, a former Parish-Hadley associate.

"I chose fabrics in natural fibers like silk and linen to highlight the colors in the wallpaper panels," says Reisler, who collaborated with Connors on the loft's design. "There are soft blues and greens and a shimmering apricot to complement the warmth of the woods. I used palm-tree motifs as well as designs that I found in the Parish-Hadley archives."

The linen coverlet and pillow shams on the circa 1840 West Indian mahogany four-poster in the combined bedroom and study is hand-printed with Albert Hadley's Tree of Life design. A pair of Philippine side tables and a Danish West Indian Neoclassical armchair complement a leather club chair and a nineteenth-century English desk. Antique gilt mirrors and a chest of drawers from Connors's latest collection, Island Woven Mahogany, complete the light-infused room. French doors and shutters designed by Connors open onto a bamboo-laden garden terrace, which, along with the bedroom's towering date palms and ceiling fans, creates an oasis of refined tropical serenity.

Whether it is a coffee grinder from the island of Hispaniola that functions as a planter or a Philippine hardwood rice bowl filled with seashells, the exotic objects displayed throughout the loft are all an expression of Michael Connors's adventurous sense of style. "The whole idea," comments Reisler, "was to create a stimulating yet comfortable and calm environment that reflects Michael's worldliness and passion for the things that he loves." □



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