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CLIFF DWELLING

PERCHED ABOVE THE PACIFIC, A 1970S HOME IS UPDATED WITHOUT LOSING ITS ICONIC SEA RANCH STYLE.

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BUTLER ARMSDEN ARCHITECTS

INTERIOR DESIGN / MATTHEW LEVERONE, LEVERONE DESIGN

HOME BUILDER / CLAYTON TIMBRELL, CLAYTON TIMBRELL & COMPANY

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / TONY VENTRELLA AND SUSAN VENTRELLA,
GUALALA NURSERY & TRADING COMPANY



Sea Ranch, the iconic community located on a 10-mile stretch along the Pacific coastline two-and-a-half hours north of San Francisco, boasts a dramatic landscape where rugged cliffs, raging waves and towering cypress trees converge. Architect and developer Alfred Boeke, who worked for architect Richard Neutra early in his career, knew such a display should be preserved. So, in 1963, Boeke convinced his employer, the real estate company Oceanic California, to purchase the land and let him create a residential community that would blend with the environment. The community that he devised—along with other architects, including Charles Moore, William Turnbull Jr. and Joseph Esherick, and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin—is a place of not only natural beauty, but of architectural prominence: Its first construction, Condominium One, is on the National Register of Historic Places. And, like most of the residences at Sea Ranch, the house that architects Lewis Butler and Reba Jones and designer Matthew Leverone renovated for their clients, Peter Wald and Christina Hall, shares the modernist aesthetic of that inaugural design.

With that history and architectural significance in mind, the team went about updating the home, opening it to its ocean views and expanding it to include guest quarters. “We didn’t want the house to lose its early Sea Ranch aesthetic,” says Butler of the couple’s residence, which was originally designed in 1974 by Ralph Matheson and renovated in the 1990s by Turnbull. The owners didn’t want that either. “One of the first things I did when I moved from the East Coast to San Francisco in 1977 was visit Sea Ranch,” Peter says. “The place has such a rich history.” Peter was immediately smitten and continued to visit the community once he and Christina married and had three children. “We rented houses there three or four times a year,” he says. And after years of staying in Sea Ranch as often as possible, the couple found their dream home there. “I was walking one day with my family and saw a house with a lawn that sloped down to a cliff with a 30-foot drop into the ocean,” Peter says. “It was magnificent.” But the property wasn’t for sale. Two months later, Peter’s real estate agent contacted him about a listing in Sea Ranch, and it was that property. Two days later, the couple purchased it.

Architects Lewis Butler and Reba Jones and designer Matthew Leverone updated a 1970s home perched on a cliff in Sea Ranch. A guesthouse was added to the property and both structures were clad with vertical cedar siding. Tony and Susan Ventrella refreshed the landscape with California natives and New Zealand plantings.

A new spacious library features a spiral staircase, which accesses a second-level office. A blackened-steel side table by Crate & Barrel sits next to a custom A. Rudin sectional upholstered with a Pindler fabric. The rug is from Woven Designs.





Leverone appointed the living area with a David Weeks Studio light fixture, which suspends above an A. Rudin sofa, stools from Room & Board and coffee tables of his own design. The designer also placed a pair of swivel chairs by A. Rudin upholstered with a Holly Hunt fabric near the new windows by Fleetwood Windows & Doors.

The family lived in the house for five years before hiring Butler, Jones and Leverone to make changes. "We wanted to study it," says Peter, who commissioned the architects and the designer to both preserve elements and create new features. Like Condominium One, the couple's residence was inspired by the historically agrarian vernacular of the area and features the same understated box form clad with vertical wood siding. The architects replaced the exterior redwood siding with cedar, but kept its verticality. "It was intended to bring your eye up to the sky," says Jones. They used the same cedar siding for a new structure that contains a guesthouse and a garage. "It's cited on the northeast corner of the property behind the main house," says Butler. "The area between the two buildings forms a courtyard." Within that enclosure, landscape designers Tony and Susan Ventrella, who updated the grounds for the couple, added California natives along with New Zealand plantings to achieve a coastal look.

When it came to the existing garage, which was attached to the main house, the architects converted it into a large family room. Next to the master suite, Butler and Jones, who worked with local architect Steve Brodie of Brodie Architecture & Design to secure permitting and approvals for the design, turned two bedrooms into a library and placed a second-level office for Peter above in what looks like a tower. "We matched it to an existing tower on the west side of the house that holds Christina's office and the daughter's bedroom," Jones says.

In deference to the commanding site, the couple also wanted to be able to see the ocean from as many rooms as possible. To honor that request, Butler and Jones expanded many of the living area's existing windows, and they also removed a large Sonoma fieldstone fireplace from the center of the room. "That had a very big impact on the space," says Jones of the now open sight line from the entry through the living area to the ocean. Complementing the natural light that now floods the house, PritchardPeck Lighting designed a new illumination system and replaced the 1970s scheme. "Light bulbs in porcelain sockets and fluorescent tube lights were removed and track and recessed lights were installed," says Jones.

Opposite: In the open kitchen, a Caesarstone countertop complements sleek Bulthaup cabinetry and a back-painted glass backsplash by Paige Glass. The faucets are by Dornbracht; the new floors are by Tree Lovers Floors.

Below: In the dining space, dome pendants by FontanaArte from YLighting hang above a table by Rimadesio from Arkitektura. Leverone arranged Ava chairs from Room & Board around the table and added texture to the area with a wool rug with leather binding from Woven Designs.



Opposite: Leverone had a cushion upholstered for a built-in window seat in the wife's office; it creates a comfortable perch and offers an expansive view. Builder Clayton Timbrell executed the vertical-grain Douglas-fir paneling.

Below: In keeping with the Sea Ranch vernacular, Butler and Jones worked with the architecture's original box-like forms when adding an additional tower to the main structure to house a second office. A series of steps off the rear façade lead to a lawn, which overlooks the Pacific Ocean.



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-LEWIS BUTLER



When it came to the interiors, Leverone, who selected the furnishings and finishes throughout, worked with the architects from the project's inception to ensure a holistic approach. In the main open space containing the living and dining areas and kitchen, the designer added grayed-espresso rift-cut wood floors to play off the Douglas-fir paneling cladding the walls and ceiling. "The interiors had to speak to the landscape without overpowering it," says Leverone. In the living area, he covered a low-slung sofa with a wool-velvet fabric and paired it with coffee tables displaying leathered-black-granite tops. Other natural elements include a taupe-hued wool rug and swivel chairs wearing a soft linen.

As the living area is contiguous with the dining area and kitchen, Leverone took into account the openness of the spaces in his design. In the dining area, he suspended white-painted aluminum dome-shaped pendants. "The selection had to play perfectly with the David Weeks Studio fixture in the living area," Leverone says. "And since the kitchen is adjacent, it was important not to block the view." He furnished the space with an etched-glass table and leather chairs. "Our key directive for the dining area was to sit the clients' entire family comfortably," he says.

In the new family room, Leverone designed built-in window seats to flank a fireplace, which he clad with a flamed-finish sea-grass limestone. "They can be used as additional sleeping areas," says the designer, who also arranged a gray velvet-covered sofa and pale blue leather-upholstered ottomans in the room. "The kids can hang out and watch TV on the large sectional while sitting by a fire on stormy Sea Ranch days." To complete the space, Laura Grigsby of Laura Grigsby Art Consulting helped the owners select the large-scale painting by Erin Lawlor that hangs behind the sofa, as well as the other artworks displayed throughout the house.

On both a large and small scale, no detail was overlooked throughout the project. "The client was most interested in getting things right," says builder Clayton Timbrell. "The uniqueness of running a project in such a remote area required a high level of organization. We actually housed a handful of our staff in a rental house near the job site." The level of dedication shown by the entire team resulted in a house that honors its history and the dramatic landscape that surrounds it. "We did smaller things that felt like really big things," Butler says. "That's what makes it so good." **L**

Above: In the common room of the guesthouse, Leverone arranged a sectional sofa by BoConcept with a Tangier Hassock ottoman by Michael Berman Limited from Sloan Miyasato near the room's ample windows. The armchair is by Jens Risom for Knoll from Design Within Reach, and the wool rug is from Paterson Floor Coverings.

Opposite: A stone terrace located off of the family room steps up to a wood deck off of the dining area and offers sweeping views across the backyard lawn to the water. The furnishings are by Janus et Cie.

Nightstands by A. Rudin flank the owners' bed by Duxiana in the master bedroom, where the walls are wrapped with vertical wood paneling. The bench at the foot of the bed is custom. The artwork by Indira Martina Morre, and other works throughout, were sourced through Laura Grigsby Art Consulting.



Below, left: Leverone created a seating area in the master bedroom with two A. Rudin chairs upholstered with fabric by Romo. They rest on a wool rug from Paterson Floor Coverings. The window shades are by Lutron.

Below, right: Custom cabinetry crafted by Gleason and Tankard defines the master bathroom, where Wetstyle sinks are paired with Dornbracht faucets. Above the Caesarstone countertop, two mirrors flank a sconce by Eureka. A custom ottoman rests on an RH rug.

