

Tiburon Sentinel

A restored classic gets a second chance.

After years of idyllic getaways in the Bay Area, a Michigan couple began dreaming of making Northern California a more permanent part of their lives. Their first step was a pied-à-terre in San Francisco. Around that time, the husband's twin brother acquired a lot in Atherton and commissioned architect Robert Swatt of Swatt + Partners to design a modern residence. Inspired by the results, the couple approached Swatt to create a similarly contemporary home—this time in Tiburon, on a hillside overlooking the San Francisco Bay.

Right: Landscape architect Stefan Thuilot added low shrubs, slow-growing trees and grasses that won't impede surrounding views of the Bay. Opposite: Swatt added a row of period-perfect steel pilotis in place of walls and other supports under the three-story house.



BY KENDRA BOUTELL PHOTOS BY MATTHEW MILLMAN





“We had looked at so many locations, but none appealed as much to us as Tiburon because of its location, beauty, and serenity,” recalls the husband. “It has water, mountains, and its very own ecosystem.”

Their wish list was concise but ambitious: panoramic views of the Bay, the Golden Gate Bridge, and Mount Tamalpais. The couple found their ideal setting high on a ridge in Old Tiburon, where a 4,700-square-foot midcentury house—marred by years of awkward renovations—stood ready for reinvention. Swatt proposed a sensitive remodel rather than a full rebuild. “We kept the best elements of the original structure and reworked the rest to achieve a cohesive whole,” he explains. “It now feels, in every respect, like a brand-new home.”

Swatt’s design embraces the site’s sweeping vistas with walls of glass that stretch from floor to ceiling and wall to wall, drawing the outdoors inward.

Left: Going down from the third floor living room, a stairway — displaying British photographer Jonathan Smith’s black and white chromatic print titled Horizon #30 — under a skylight, has clear glass guardrails. It leads to the family room, an office, and guest suites on the second floor.



Working with Stroub Construction, he selected a restrained palette of materials—warm gray Windsor limestone, white integral-colored stucco, and greige-stained Western Red Cedar. Each serves a precise architectural purpose: limestone for vertical anchoring, stucco for horizontal flow, and cedar to connect the home's geometry with the surrounding landscape. Cantilevered decks enclosed in glass railings extend the living spaces outward, heightening the home's dialogue with the terrain.

A bridge from the street and garage leads directly to the upper-level entry. To capture the best views, Swatt and the clients inverted the floor plan—placing the living, dining, and kitchen areas, along with the primary suite, on the top floor. For the interiors, they turned to Matthew Leverone of Leverone Design, whom they discovered online and admired for his restrained, consistently modern aesthetic.

"They wanted an interior that felt both engaging and serene," Leverone says. "With views as extraordinary as these,

Top right: Inspired by the building's neo-plasticism and intersecting planes, Leverone commissioned artist Eric Slayton's raw concrete entry bench, held aloft on black powder-coated steel.

Right: The entry bridge, from the street to the top floor of the house built on a down-sloping lot, is exposed to the elements.

Opposite: Walls of hand-trowled white plaster juxtaposed against wood plank and stone tile cladding add a palette of integral colors favored by Louis Kahn and Ray Kappe, both architects Swatt admires. A lowered soffit above the pivoting front door forms a 'porch' at the entrance à la Frank Lloyd Wright and Richard Neutra. As a whimsical counterpoint to the rectilinear features, Leverone added triangular ottomans.







everything inside needed to honor rather than distract from the landscape.”

Leverone echoed the architectural palette with a soft, monochromatic gray scheme. A gracious foyer opens to a light-filled living area, where Swatt introduced a floating ceiling plane of stained cedar boards for warmth and definition. Two nested coffee tables by Egg Collective anchor the seating arrangement, centered on a nine-foot silver linen sofa facing the bay. A curved-back daybed in graphite mohair and a pair of '70s-inspired Thierry Lemaire armchairs round out the composition, while a black, meditative painting by James Austin Murray adds a striking visual punctuation.

In the adjacent dining area, a chandelier from Ochre—its hand-blown glass drops suspended like dew—hangs above a rectangular taupe-finished Studio Piet Boon table. Eight Italian leather tub chairs invite long, convivial meals. Above a wall-mounted oak console hangs *Prairie Skies*, a landscape by Sahba Shere from the couple's contemporary art col-

Left: The home's original layout did not take advantage of the site's spectacular views of the surrounding bay waters and the Golden Gate Bridge in the distance (not visible here). So, Swatt reconfigured walls for a more open plan that flows outward to the decks and added more glass for better views of weather pageantry. Leverone's muted interiors yield the stage to the ever-changing display and complement the clients' extensive art collection.





A new skylight hovers over a Carrara marble kitchen island. Bar stools by Mark Albrecht Studio have stainless steel frames and woven leather seats and backs. Opposite: John Opper's 1971 colorful abstract hangs above a Joseph Dirand-esque daybed made by Hardesty Dwyer & Co and upholstered with Brentano fabric.



lection. A gray silk ombré rug grounds the space, and beyond the glass doors, Swatt's minimalist deck—furnished with midcentury-inspired pieces—beckons for sunrise coffees and sunset gatherings.

Despite its transformation, the home retains the soul of its original site. “For my wife and me, exterior beauty and interior function are equally important,” says the husband. “Robert created an extraordinary structure, and with Matthew, a serene, livable interior. Together, they blended inside and out into a seamless whole. Our home now embodies the essence of living in Marin County and the North Bay.” 🌿

Top: The primary bath's floating double vanity has a wood face, and a white corian top.

Bottom: In the bedroom, Leverone sparked the generally cool, neutral palette with a mari-gold-hued wool mohair fabric covering Christophe Delcourt's LEK armchair.

Opposite: In the second-floor family room, a sculptural Jeffrey Bennett lounge chair can pivot toward a view of the Golden Gate Bridge. Beneath the circular walnut-veneer coffee table is a custom Merino wool rug from Safar.



