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# MAKING WAVES

INSPIRED BY THE ROMANCE OF THE COASTAL BLUFFS,  
A NEW HOME TAKES ITS STYLISTIC CUES FROM THE SEA AND SKY.

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ARCHITECTURE / **BROOKS WALKER, ANNE GRIFFES AND  
DAVID SHUTT, WALKER WARNER ARCHITECTS**  
INTERIOR DESIGN / **KRISTI WILL AND KRISTA BARRY, KRISTI WILL DESIGN**  
HOME BUILDER / **DAN PELSINGER, MATAROZZI PELSINGER BUILDERS**  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / **RON LUTSKO JR. AND  
LINDSEY GERLACH, LUTSKO ASSOCIATES**



Seeking a coastal escape that fused soothing minimalism with traditional elements, a San Mateo County couple turned to designer Kristi Will to bring this vision to life. The simplicity of the East Coast Shaker-style home became a useful touchstone for developing the home's palette, as seen in the main entry, which features Benjamin Moore's Paper White on the paneling and natural wood tones along the streamlined stair treads and railing.

There's something singularly magical about the Northern California coast, where wildflower-laden bluffs meet the churning Pacific and gray whales seasonally leap from the waves. This landscape was like a siren call to a couple, both Massachusetts natives, who craved a return to life by the ocean. They decided to build a home on the San Mateo County shoreline, but what kind of home was in question. The wife wanted the traditional Cape Cod architecture of her childhood, while the husband loves the streamlined simplicity of minimalist design. To strike a balance, they turned to designer Kristi Will and architect Brooks Walker to wed two different visions of seaside living. "We set out to make something unique to them; an expression of all the things they love," says Will of the collaboration.

Beginning with the exterior, Walker—along with architects Anne Griffes and David Shutt (who has since left the company)—invoked an East Coast architectural vernacular with peaked roofs, shed dormers and white trim. The architects toyed with traditional lines, designing the asymmetrical gables and minimalistic window frames built by general contractor Dan Pelsinger and his team. "We wanted to create this sense of geometry within these familiar forms that speak to a modern sensibility," Walker explains.

Celebrating the site's natural gifts also became central to fusing two styles. Modern picture windows disrupt the home's traditional squareness with expansive panes of glass that let the outdoors in. Unexpected materials introduce an earthiness to the home. For example, for the iconic Cape Cod-style shingle siding, the design team used reclaimed sinker cypress—a Southern wood that spent a century at the bottom of a river, where the elements created what the architect describes as an unique mottled texture. "When you get up close, it has a richness and depth that's unlike anything else," Walker observes.

Embracing nature also guided landscape architects Ron Lutsko, Jr. and Lindsey Gerlach when shaping the outdoor spaces. When driving up to the property for the first time, "All of a sudden, we were sitting on the edge of this beautiful coastal prairie with the ocean just beyond," recalls Lutsko. "It's something that we really seized upon, to make sure visitors experience this the way we did, but through our design." To blur the lines between the cultivated and wild, the team incorporated a blend of native grasses and bulbs. "When you enter the backyard, you still feel like you walked straight into the coastal meadow," Lutsko says.

To underscore these spectacular views from the interior, Will's team composed a clean white palette that satisfied the husband's fondness for simplicity, while using traditional materials the wife loved, like whitewashed paneling and soft gray plaster. This created an airy combination that "feels so expansive," explains Will. "When you're looking through the glass out to the ocean, you don't even notice the ceiling because everything else recedes away."

The home's use of stone fuses this connection to the coast, starting with the white granite used throughout the ground floor, which is flamed and brushed to look like beach sand frozen in time. For the kitchen, Will found a dreamy Brazilian Azul Bahia granite for the statement backsplash that adds visual currents of color to the seamless cabinetry. The stone "has a really beautiful watercolor effect, which creates this relationship to the water," notes the designer.

Inspired by the undulating cliffs outside, Will felt free to select pieces that played with shape and movement. With this in mind, she searched for furniture with sculptural lines, like Vladimir Kagan curved sofas in the living room and bright yellow Pierre Paulin mushroom chairs tucked away in the master bedroom. Though appeasing the husband's love of modern design, these pieces were softened with plush velvets and silks that brought the cozy tactility the wife coveted.

The home also features some of the last pieces created by the late acclaimed architect Zaha Hadid, known for expressing fluid, wave-like gestures in static forms. In the living room, Hadid's UltraStellar coffee table grounds the space with tide-like ripples carved into walnut, while her Liquid Glacial table is the centerpiece of the dining room. "As a designer, working with the Zaha Hadid architectural firm to source these pieces was such a rare, privileged opportunity," shares Will about the experience.

With guidance from art advisor Jacqueline Becker, the home's collection is equally dynamic with works such as Leo Villareal's Rothko-inspired LED light installation, which bathes the living room in revolving shades of sunrise yellows to twilight blues.

Blurring indoors and out, it's these details that celebrate the natural landscape that first captured the homeowners' imagination. "Each room has its own personality," says Will, "but it's all about providing this great backdrop to the view that's happening just beyond." **L**

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—KRISTI WILL





**Above:** Behind the white Thassos granite farmhouse sink in the kitchen, Brazilian Azul Bahia granite backsplash featuring oceanic hues echo the views outside. "This was a special request from the client," says Will. "They used a small piece of the same slab in their previous home 25 years ago and just loved the colors."

**Left:** The kitchen has become a favored gathering spot for the family, especially around the central island flanked by custom Orchard stools created by Schiller Design. Reflecting the fresh white hues and warm woods of the home, these pieces feature a subtle but sentimental detail, as each one is made "with different heights for different family members," notes Will.





**Above:** Traditional and modern details merge in the kitchen, combining Cape Cod-inspired paneling with custom Studio Becker oak cabinetry that conceals extra storage. Engineering the built-in aquarium also proved a technical feat for the entire team, who collaborated with Nathan Gon of Aquascape Designs on the project.

**Opposite:** Form and function meet in the family media room, with artfully designed fixtures like a quartet of striped, square sconces by Aqua Creations and custom geometric Bang & Olufsen floor speakers that feel more akin to modernist sculpture than audio equipment. A Rosemary Hallgarten Tibetan rug and classic Eames chair and ottoman complete the perfect listening corner. Above a Holly Hunt lacquered console hangs a painting by Bernd Haussmann.





**Above:** When selecting pieces for this reading nook, “we were looking for something that was innovative and sculptural,” recalls Will, who gravitated toward the visual illusion of the Boffi CTline bookcases. “Each one of those pieces is its own unit, so you can create various shapes.” A vintage Pierre Paulin chaise lounge also plays with line and form.

**Opposite:** Will worked with art advisor Jacqueline Becker to create immersive experiences like the effervescent ceramic installation by artist Jennifer Prichard in the stairwell. A Lindsey Adelman Knotty Bubbles chandelier hangs above. “We loved the nautical feel of the piece, and how she puts together organic shapes in a modern way,” notes Will, who also collaborated with designer Anna Kondolf on the home’s overall lighting program.





Vertical oak paneling creates a cabin-like feel in the master bedroom, which inspired the designer to lean into the space's cozy atmosphere with a Holly Hunt silk shag rug, an E. Braun & Co. bed coverlet, and the classic Pierre Paulin Mushroom chairs in the wife's favorite shade of yellow. "It's still warm and inviting, but it has an air of romance to it," notes Will.



For their college-age son who is an occasional resident, the couple wanted a bedroom that doubles as an inspiring space for him to work. So, the team installed a magnetic whiteboard perfect for scribbling equations and music notations while maintaining the airy, whitewashed palette. Above a Thos. Moser bed hangs mirrored artwork by George Sherwood.



The home's gable roofline creates an airy study alcove in the son's bedroom, with a glass doorway that opens up directly to the stunning coastal meadow beyond. The designer completed the reflective nook with a classic Barcelona chair, a Thos. Moser standing desk and an Orchard stool by Schiller Design.

