

CHOME

CALIFORNIA STYLE

AT LEISURE

LAKE TAHOE

NEWPORT BEACH

BEVERLY HILLS

SAN FRANCISCO

PORTOLA VALLEY

LOS ANGELES



RAISING THE BARN

San Francisco's Walker Warner Architects dream up a Portola Valley retreat that's refreshingly modern—and belies its pastoral façade

BY HEATHER JOHN FOGARTY PHOTOGRAPHED BY MATTHEW MILLMAN



Landscape designer Janell Denler Hobart planted a low-water evergreen meadow using graphic clusters of *Pennisetum spathiolatum*. OPPOSITE Elizabeth Hill created a quiet reading spot with comfortable chairs and an ottoman from Sutherland.

Doors are designed to open and spill out onto a lawn. BELOW The catering kitchen features Gaggenau ovens, a Thermador cooktop and a Perlick wine refrigerator; counters are Caesarstone, cabinets by Wood-Mode and backsplash is tile from Ann Sacks.



ADMIRED FOR ITS LUSH rolling hills, native oaks and staggering rugged beauty, Portola Valley has long been home to horses and high-tech investors alike. Tucked away on the eastern slope of the Santa Cruz Mountains, not too far from better-known San Mateo hubs like Mountain View and Palo Alto, the town boasts a quiet, rustic charm. “The property had horses at one time,” says architect Greg Warner, principal of Walker Warner Architects in San Francisco. “My clients’ notion was that the simple form of a barn was very appealing and in keeping with the character of the surroundings.”

The homeowners, whose traditional, Nantucket-style shingled residence sits across a wooded grove on the four-acre property, wanted a space where they could work as well as escape to on weekends. They enlisted Gentry Construction, Walker Warner Architects to design the 5,200-square-foot retreat, and interior designer Elizabeth Hill of Selby House LTD to collaborate. “At a distance, the barn has a rural character, but as you get closer the building becomes much more sophisticated and contemporary,” Warner says. Looking at materials alone, the style transitions: reclaimed oak from Kentucky barrel barns, ebonized mahogany and standing seam metal roofing painted to look like zinc.

Walker Warner designed three connected structures to house an office, guest suite and a great room, which the family uses for entertaining and charity events as well as watching Giants games on a 13-foot-wide television. The elegant master suite, with its spa-like bathroom, is so tranquil that the couple often sequesters there. A sleek catering kitchen connects the office and main living quarters, and the adjoining garage doubles as a recreational room. “The vintage roadster in the garage is like a piece of art, and the next bay has a pool table,” Warner says. “The space is used differently and playfully. You might look at the buildings and think they’re a cluster of old barns.”

The goal was a neutral, contemporary environment. “The general style was to be light and bright with crisp lines and big gestures of space to hold large pieces of art,” says Hill. “We did not want a lot of bold colors in the art to distract.”

The architects worked with landscape designer Janell Denler Hobart to capitalize on the property’s stunning vistas, adding expansive windows that almost appear to recede. Hobart planted a predominantly low-water evergreen palette including California lilacs, coffee berry and strawberry trees. “The emphasis on mass planting and controlled seasonal color brings serenity to the garden experience, year-round,” Hobart says. Warner adds, “Nothing about the design competes with the natural beauty of what you see out the window.” •



ABOVE In a light-drenched guest suite dressed in Legacy Linens, the custom-designed trunk hides a flatscreen TV. BELOW In the media room, a custom sectional sofa is upholstered in a Cowtan & Tout fabric, and can be reconfigured to accommodate large parties.



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Ebonized mahogany doors open to reveal the garage, which is anything but—three bays house a vintage roadster, a pool table and a Euro Style table and chairs beneath a Pete Reilly painting.