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LUXE LIVING IN SILICON VALLEY

Inside the 2002 San Francisco
Decorator Showcase

Interviews with Isabella von Boch
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Featuring

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The Art of Cool

San Ramon interior designer Martin Mitchell's client wanted a very modern, minimal interior environment. Mitchell's sleek, subtle, classically modern interpretation for this Benicia home fits the bill.

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INTERIOR DESIGN BY MARTIN PERRI INTERIORS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOUGLAS JOHNSON

When asked what makes his interior designs characteristically his, Martin Mitchell, who has worked in the design industry for 17 years, ten of them at his firm Martin Perri Interiors, answers that it is his involvement with details. "If given the opportunity," he explains, "we can go in at the earliest stages of new construction or remodels and work with the architect, contractor, and client to create overall space planning and flow. And by working very closely with the client, we can create something unique to and specific for a particular job. But timing is of the essence. Working from the very beginning phases of a project really makes a big difference to the final outcome, and to fulfilling a client's expectations from a design perspective."

Mitchell, who had first worked with this client on a project ten years ago, did get the chance to work on this Benicia home from the very beginning. "My clients had purchased a lot with an older existing home on the property. They spent a lot of time looking for the right piece of real estate for what would be their home, and brought



me in at the preliminary stage of architectural development. "We leveled the structure and developed a plan adapted from the client's previous home. But because the plan was drawn up for this specific site, the design plan was different in orientation and scale."

The ultimate design of the house "had a lot to do with views," says Mitchell. From the house, one can see the foothills of the Martinez Valley and a hill panoramic view of the Carquinez Strait, Carquinez Bridge, and Benicia Bridge. "These views of mountains and water played an integral part in the orientation of the house," says Mitchell.

Mitchell explains the home's exterior has an English Tudor feeling, but the materials and colors and textures have been used in a contemporary fashion. "Inside, the client wanted a very modern, minimal interior environment. The exterior materials and colors reinforce what's happening on the inside."

In designing the interiors and choosing the furnishings, Mitchell says, "We played with a lot of elements and philosophies, and implemented some of my client's personal preferences in carrying out the landscape design."



Previous pages: As elsewhere in the home, the living room floor is fashioned from bamboo. The cocktail table is from Ralph Lauren's Home Collection. Sofa by Directional with fabric from J. Robert Scott. Accent table by Barbara Beckmann Studios. Window treatments are a Martin Perri Interiors design.

The dining room, opposite above, is just off the entry: Dining table is from Greg Sheres Studio; the mohair seats by Design Tex.

In the kitchen, opposite, the clean lines and natural finish of the bird's-eye maple cabinetry reinforces the minimal style. Reeded glass in cabinet doors offers openness as well as texture. Countertops are a seafoam green granite from Alpha Marble and Granite. Stainless steel dishwashers are from Asko.

In the library, left, the bird's-eye maple cabinetry with stainless steel hardware conceals office equipment. The high gloss maple with stainless steel contrast desk is custom made by Greg Sheres Studio, the light fixture is from Sloan Miyasato.

A wall shelf and mirror from Brueton hangs in the foyer, above, between the entrance and the kitchen. The halogen sconces are an integral part of the mirror, which reflects a glimpse of two recessed niches used to display part of the owner's art glass collection.

The clean lines in the guest bath, right, suggest a Moderne/Deco/Retro revival. The maple vanity with stainless steel hardware, a floating glass countertop, and steel risers is a custom design by Martin Perri Interiors. Sink and faucet by Kohler. Stainless steel mirror by J. Robert Scott. Accent lights by Kovacs.

Balconies off the upstairs media room, below take advantage of the panoramic view. The room is furnished with multiple groupings of large, overstuffed comfortable chairs with other supplemental seating for entertaining or karaoke. There is also a wet bar and a food preparation area.

The diminished colors of the materials and the absence of patio furniture around the pool opposite, exemplify the client's spare, clean aesthetic. A stream runs around the gazebo, rock waterfall and koi pond. The landscaping is by John Nishizawa Landscape. The Chinese tea table in the foreground was carved from one piece of stone. "A serene, peaceful area," says Martin Mitchell.





Inside and out, this spiritual influence is instrumental. In addition, natural materials, including wood, stone, slate, glass, and marble, were a primary emphasis in the interior. “Nothing faux or artificial,” says Mitchell.

Mitchell calls this project extremely successful. “There were not a lot of limitations placed on carrying out concepts. The client gave direction, but let us roll with the project.

Because of his experience with prior design projects, he has learned to deal with the unexpected.”

And the outcome of that flexibility? “He is extremely pleased. Compared to our last project together, this home has a lot more detail, and more of an emphasis on quality.”