

STYLE & DESIGN

Home





A view of the courtyard makes for a peaceful introduction to the home.

# Inside OUT

A modern home embraces the outdoors while bringing an urban sensibility to suburban living.

By Theresa Gonzalez

A Menlo Park neighborhood known more for shingled cottages than ultramodern structures was in for a minimalist awakening when architect John Lum rode into town. His blank canvas for a family of four's forever home started with a flat ½-acre lot, adorned simply by a heritage redwood and mature oaks. "We're based in San Francisco, so we don't get many opportunities to work on a ½-acre flat lot," says Lum. "I was pleased the owners wanted a contemporary house—not a modern farmhouse."

Four cedar-clad pavilions became the starting point for Lum's design, each with their own function and all connected by glass walkways that look out to a central courtyard and outdoor area made for entertaining (a raised

pool, fire pit, dining and lounge nooks). "The owners wanted a lot of glass," Lum recalls. "We had to really study the orientation so it didn't become a hot box in the afternoon."

Despite all the glass, designed mostly toward the northeast, privacy was important, which led Lum to consider the entry points into the four-bedroom, eight-bath home. "We wanted to deconstruct the suburbs—no one sits on their front porch anymore," he says. "This is a neighborhood where everyone drives, so how do you create a connected entryway?" The answer: through a garage (part of the first pavilion) that shares the same mudroom as the front entry, leaving the main entrance somewhat symbolic, notes Lum.

The second pavilion houses a spacious



Clockwise from left: The airy living room with Michael Wolf's "Night #1" (2004) hanging over the buffet; an outdoor cast stone bench by Galanter & Jones warms the space with radiant heat and an orange hue; the walnut dining table was one of the few pieces custom-designed by Zaharias.



kitchen that extends to an outdoor dining area. "They were coming from a traditional ranch home," says Lum. "They didn't want a separate kitchen, just one large room they could all live in." Still, the dishwashing area is hidden away from the main entertaining space while an extended island invites guests to gather around.

The third pavilion is home to a double-height living and dining space. Fleetwood sliding glass doors on the east and west sides of the living room provide more access to the outdoor spaces. The fourth pavilion connects all these boxes on the

ground floor with a study just off the kitchen for the family's two teenage girls.

Menlo Park interior designer Stephanie Zaharias came in to blend the husband's clean-lined ultramodern aesthetic with the wife's affinity for midcentury and bold blues. "I had to really work at bridging their styles with John's style and the intention of the home," says Zaharias.

A playful FilzFelt colorblock rug in the living room warms and brightens up the white oak floors, and sleek yet not-so-precious sofas from Design Within Reach and Thayer Coggin

keep the area comfortable. "I think embracing retail in a beautiful home filled with pets and teens should be lauded for its practicality," notes Zaharias. "They wanted to host end-of-school-year parties and such without obsessing over untouchable things, especially with such expansive indoor-outdoor living."

Budget instead went toward artisan tiles and lighting that would soften the home's minimal edge. "Almost every bedroom and office has decorative lighting," notes Zaharias. "Having all these light fixtures be unique yet work together was really fun to do." Built-in casework, she adds, made sure technology wasn't visible in a high-tech house. A bench in the girls' study, for example, features a pullout with a printer, and the tall cubby hides away charging gadgets.

Solar and radiant heating, a whole house fan and operable skylights with stack-effect ventilation give the home its sustainability cred, but Lum showed restraint when it came to home tech fads. "I've seen many tech clients want the latest and greatest gadgets, but I don't think that leads to longevity of a home," says Lum. "Using classic materials, creating a plan that can be flexible... embracing imperfection—the cedar, for example, will age over time." Zaharias, who has worked with Lum on other projects, adds: "I loved that this urban architect and urban approach was done in the Valley on this very traditional street, and it's a fantastic street—that was just really fun for me." ■

