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A New Point of View

BY JOAN WATERS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT CANFIELD PHOTOGRAPHY AND MANDY DRAPER



Howard Dickstein and Jeannine English have been renovating their 1940s-era Sierra Oaks Vista home in phases almost since they bought it in 1995. During the remodel of the kitchen area—the latest to go under the hammer—architect and interior designer Mary Ann Schicketanz of Carver + Schicketanz Architects in Carmel tore out a bank of upper cabinets, expanding the view through the living room and directing the eye to a thick stand of majestic redwoods planted in the 1960s. The result? A decidedly coastal tranquility that permeates the very heart of the home.



“The previous architectural style was typical midcentury ranch,” says Schicketanz, who has worked with the homeowners through each of their renovations. “I think sometimes it’s hard to appreciate these houses because they often have horrible finish materials, and it can be hard to see beyond that. But the floors, the volume, the ceiling heights are great—once you strip them of all the outdated stuff.” The kitchen’s original vaulted ceiling had been lowered, probably in the 1980s. “It was always there,” Schicketanz says. “We just had to uncover it.”

Each of the major revamps has resulted in a better—not bigger—house. “The footprint hasn’t changed,” Schicketanz says. Lots of other things did: Rooms were reconfigured, walls went away, windows and doors were expanded, interior colors were brightened. “It was very dark before, and we had to deal with that,” Schicketanz says. “We painted everything white and gave it a glow.” The whimsical table, chairs and barstools are by Greg Hawthorne of the Hawthorne Gallery in Big Sur. “They were designed for a coastal environment,” Dickstein says. “But they work really well here.”



ABOVE—Topped with a specialized frosted glass, the island energizes the interior and defines the kitchen space by establishing prep and dining areas. “The green color brings life into the space and sets off the other monochromatic surfaces,” Dickstein says. Before the renovation, the existing windows weren’t low enough to take in the view of the front yard. The remodel fixed that.

LEFT—Visitors used to have to navigate their way to the front door via a narrow walkway along the edge of the overhang. Now, a big-tree canopy shelters an enlarged entry and flagstone path, creating a serene, welcoming space. Actually, Dickstein says, replacing the old wood siding with cedar transformed the house.



The couple's contiguous living and family rooms form an expansive open space under an exposed-beam ceiling. Pristine walls and a floor of rustic clay brick set off color-saturated ceramics, furnishings and fine art. The painted credenza in the family room (pictured right) is a notable work, created for the 1953 Venice (Italy) Biennale, a prestigious exhibition of contemporary art. "The images are just fantastic," Dickstein says of the piece they purchased in a San Francisco antiques gallery.

A bank of windows along the back of the house brings in a fresh perspective of the redwood grove that first attracted the couple to the property. "It really feels like you're walking in a state park," Dickstein says. One of English's favorite views is revealed after dark. "When you look into the house from the backyard at night, you can really see and appreciate the art," she says. Dickstein adds that the tranquility of the landscape and aesthetic pleasure of the house continue to catch his eye in surprising new ways: "I'm noticing things all the time." 📺



ABOVE—English, Dickstein and Rio in the family room. In front of the credenza, the slick, rocket-red leather ottoman also can serve as a cocktail table.

BELOW—"It wouldn't normally be your first choice—to have this wild rock fireplace in the middle of the house, so we worked around it," Schicketanz says, explaining that a previous owner tried to tame it with a "whitish glossy" finish. "We could see the beautiful colors in the chimney rocks when we went outside," English recalls. "But in here, it just looked kind of sad, so we had it sandblasted." The rocks are said to have been salvaged in the 1960s from a demolished structure in the foothills.

