

EASY LIVING

MARKED BY FLOWING INDOOR-OUTDOOR
SPACES, A SONOMA HOME ENGAGES
ITS SURROUNDINGS IN STYLE.

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INTERIOR DESIGN / **JEFF SCHLARB, JEFF SCHLARB DESIGN STUDIO**
ARCHITECTURE / **MICHAEL GUTHRIE AND HA NGUYEN, MG+CO ARCHITECTS**
HOME BUILDER / **JON REITER, REITER FINE HOME BUILDING**
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / **DAVE ROCHE AND NANCY ROCHE,**
ROCHE + ROCHE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



From the moment designer Jeff Schlarb arrived on the site of his clients' wine country home—set against a verdant hillside that unfolds into sweeping vistas—his wheels started turning with ideas for patterns and materials that would complement the organic setting. The home was under construction, but it's modern yet rustic aesthetic had been firmly established, and the designer aimed to underscore that feeling with a sense of refinement for the interiors. "It was important, however, to avoid anything fussy, and I didn't want to pick things that were expected," he says. "The clients wanted their home to be comfortable and to agree with their casual lifestyle in Sonoma." And although it was important for the design to have an air of ease, getting there would be a demanding process. "It takes many layers of work to make something look effortless," Schlarb says.

That thoughtful and rigorous approach was shared by the entire design team in bringing together a singular home for their clients: a British couple with three grown daughters. The house had been started on a 16-acre parcel about 1,000 feet above the town of Sonoma, where the behind-the-scenes planning began as soon as architect Michael Guthrie stepped on the property. "During my first visit I always leave with components from the site, like a rock or some dried-out leaves," he says of his hands-on approach to culling inspiration. "It's especially important

in a semi-remote locale such as this one where there are no contextual influences like there would be in town, so the landscape provides the inspiration."

With the seeds planted for the home's materiality, Guthrie, who designed the house in tandem with project manager Ha Nguyen, looked to the area's farmhouse vernacular to provide further influence. Inspired by the simple forms of those utilitarian buildings, the duo designed a long U-shape structure anchored by an open central space that holds the kitchen, living and dining areas. To crown the house, they introduced a metal roof, typical of agricultural buildings, in a crisp prefinished dark bronze to complement the cedar siding, which was stained to look slightly aged. "The owners wanted something that related to the wine country, so we included simple gables for a rustic modern look," Guthrie says. The structure was also outfitted with metal-frame windows and a bifold door that runs one whole length of the house, opening it up completely to the outdoors.

Playing off the façade's dissolving boundary, the architectural duo rooted the opposite side of the structure with a wall made of local stone, which was selected to resemble those early rocks found on-site. The process of finding the precise type of look they envisioned for the wall took some time. "Michael had the masons put up sample after sample until he found one that was exactly right," builder Jon Reiter says.

The architectural team of Michael Guthrie and Ha Nguyen designed a Sonoma home with openings on either side to allow for views from the auto court through the house to the backyard and the view beyond. Dave and Nancy Roche designed the landscape.



Designer Jeff Schlarb appointed an outdoor living area with a sofa and armchairs by Seasonal Living. A pair of Gandia Blasco chairs, accented with rope detailing, lend a sculptural touch, as does the clients' coffee table by RH.



Schlarb placed a custom three-cushion sofa by Weego Home upholstered with an outdoor fabric in the living area. The dining area just beyond features a John Pomp light fixture from De Sousa Hughes composed of blown-glass iridescent spheres.

Surrounding the structure, Guthrie and Nguyen established a framework for an auto court, swimming pool and a series of outdoor rooms before handing the baton to the husband-and-wife landscape team of Dave and Nancy Roche. “The site was covered with beautiful rock outcroppings that we were eager to preserve and highlight,” Nancy Roche says. “We stockpiled boulders during construction and placed them in many locations, including outside the master bedroom. We also created a gravel terrace there with succulents embedded at the base of the rocks that highlight the native ones.” The property’s existing trees were thoughtfully integrated and augmented as well. “We kept and worked around native oaks and manzanitas,” Dave Roche says, “and we introduced the two mature olive trees that frame the pool.”

As the structure was taking shape, the owners initiated the search for a designer. “While we were building, we were also searching for a flat and happened on a place in Nob Hill designed by Jeff,” the wife says. “We really liked his style of blending old and new.” Schlarb kept that contemporary-classic approach as he appointed the main public areas. To help define the living area within the open space, the designer chose a textured wool rug as an anchor and paired it with a creamy-hued upholstered sofa and matching armchairs. But he didn’t hesitate to switch things up by adding a timeless leather wingback chair, which he customized by covering the seat cushion with a striped fabric. “It’s a cool version of that classic style of chair,” says the designer, who finished the area with another armchair and a modern stacked-oak coffee table. He kept his self-described “rock ‘n’ roll approach” in the adjacent dining area with a table that is equal parts function and art. The distinctive piece features bog oak in a color gradation that goes from orange to walnut-brown to ebony and back again.

All the while, Schlarb’s talent for creating an easy-going style by means of an exacting process shines through. The series of glass orbs that dangle so freely over the dining



Above: The Roches selected an arbutus tree, underplanted with Jerusalem sage, for a steel planter, which was fabricated by Steel Geisha Designs and oxidized to match the color of the tree trunk's bark. The dining table and chairs are by RH.

Right: A trio of Visual Comfort & Co. glass pendants with a black-and-brass finish lights the black Neolith-topped kitchen island, where Cliff Young barstools wear material by Jerry Pair Leather. Precision Cabinets fabricated the walnut cabinetry, and the backsplash is made with Calacatta Oro marble. The bifold door is by NanaWall.



The living area's fireplace incorporates the same steel and marble materials used in the kitchen. The wingback chair by Coaster and the oak-and-nickel coffee table, custom-made by Seventh & 7th Designs, rest on a textured wool rug by Stark.



A canopy of Douglas fir forms the ceiling above the dining area, while the floors, here and throughout the main spaces, are concrete. The bog oak-and-steel table is by Luma Design Workshop from Sloan Miyasato, and the upholstered armchairs by Belle Meade Signature tout an outdoor fabric by Perennials.

The Roches designed the pool, which was built by Holiday Pool & Water Creations, with a dark interior to maximize the reflection of the trees and sky. Poolside, Schlarb positioned a trio of chaises by Oasiq and, on the opposite side, a curved-wood lounge by Tommy Bahama Home.



Opposite: The north-facing master bathroom was designed to be totally private with a glass door by Fleetwood Windows & Doors that opens to vineyard views. The soaking tub is by Americh, and the tub filler is by Kohler.

Below: A nightstand by Made Goods sits alongside an upholstered Brownstone Furniture bed in the master bedroom. A wool-and-bamboo-silk rug by Jaipur Living grounds the space, and the benches are by Vanguard Furniture. Teak Oasiq swivel chairs provide seating on the terrace.



table, for example, required endless hours of planning to thread the various components around and through the metal ceiling rods to get their position precisely right. And determining the perfect materials for the living area fireplace was also carefully thought through. “We wanted it to be industrial but not loft-style industrial,” explains Schlarb, who finally settled on a black steel monolith accented with just enough marble to make it luxurious and current. On the opposite side of the room, he offset the kitchen’s walnut cabinetry with an ultra-thin Neolith waterfall island with a mitered edge.

For color, the wife requested “neutral shades that were sympathetic to the environment,” recalls Schlarb, so he selected items like the soft cream-and-brown tweed-like outdoor fabric for the dining area chairs and a muted wool-and-bamboo-silk rug for the master bedroom to complement the stone outcroppings beyond. “Jeff’s use of textiles and colors pulled everything together,” the wife says. “And thanks to our team, the entire house feels anchored to the landscape with a continuous flow to the outdoors.” **LD**