

AN ARCHITECT AND A LANDSCAPE DESIGNER
WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER CREATE AN
INDOORS-MEETS-OUTDOORS MID CENTURY HAVEN.

By SHELBY DEERING
Photography by MARIKO REED/OTTO

THE OUTDOOR CONNECTION



HOMEOWNERS JIM CZAJA AND SUSAN WANG CAN EASILY ENJOY FREEDOM AND PRIVACY IN THE MIDST OF THESE INDOOR-OUTDOOR SURROUNDINGS. EVEN THOUGH THE ORIGINAL TREES WERE REMOVED ("THE EXISTING TREES WERE DISEASED AND A DANGER TO THE HOME," SAYS LANDSCAPE DESIGNER BETH MULLINS), A HEDGE AND CEDAR FENCE MAKE THE YARD FEEL LIKE A SECLUDED RETREAT.



"THE HOUSE IS IN SAN CARLOS IN A SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL SUBURBAN AREA," SAYS ARCHITECT JOHN KLOPF. "THE HOUSES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD COME FROM VARIOUS DATES AND ARE OF VARIOUS STYLES, BUT THE BULK WERE BUILT IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD THROUGH THE 1960s."

This San Carlos, California, home,

which has become a mid century paradise, was in desperate need of renovation. To create an emphasis on indoor spaces that flow easily into the outdoors, homeowners Jim Czaja and Susan Wang called in the experts. That's when John Klopf, Principal Architect of Klopf Architecture, and Beth Mullins, owner of Growsgreen Landscape Design, stepped in to turn this home into a gorgeous, green oasis.

A TRANSFORMATIVE RENOVATION

When construction started on this home in early 2015, John describes its state as "a Mid Century Modern house that had been adversely remodeled previously by an owner who tried to convert it into more of a traditional-looking home." Over the course of 10 months, the team had to undo several elements that had been added onto the home over the years.

"The house was not in any condition for a family to move in," John says. "The main goal was to 'save' the house. The previous owner of this 1960s modern home covered over the large expanses of glass with plywood and installed a massive awning at the rear of the house, blocking out most light and connection with the outdoors."



(ABOVE) THE TIGHT-KNOT WESTERN RED CEDAR AND ACCOMPANYING IPE WOOD DECKING LEND A NATURAL TOUCH TO THE EXTERIOR.

(OPPOSITE, TOP) THE INTERIORS OF THIS HOME HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY MADE OVER, INCLUDING THE LIVING SPACE THAT EFFORTLESSLY STREAMS INTO THE DINING AREA AND KITCHEN. "WHEN TOURING THE HOME WITH THE OWNERS, WE SAW IMMEDIATE POSSIBILITIES TO RECONFIGURE THE HOUSE INTO A MAIN LIVING SPACE INCLUDING KITCHEN AND DINING AREA, COMBINING WHAT USED TO BE THE OLD KITCHEN AREA AND THE UNDERUTILIZED LIVING ROOM," JOHN EXPLAINS.

(OPPOSITE, BOTTOM) THIS HOME, WHICH ONCE FELT "DARK AND CLOSED-IN" ACCORDING TO JOHN, NOW SOAKS UP LIGHT AND FRESH AIR THANKS TO A FOLDING WALL SYSTEM IN THE FOREGROUND AND A LARGE SLIDING GLASS WALL ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE MAIN LIVING AREA.



MAKE THE MOST OF EXTERIOR SPACES

At 1,882 square feet, the house simply wasn't utilizing its 5,667 square feet of outdoor space to its full potential. Upon its completion in 2016, the home now features refreshed interiors and an exterior rendered in tight-knot Western red cedar and smooth stucco. The surrounding fences mirror the cedar siding.

Outfitted in plenty of relaxed outdoor living spaces that smoothly open up to the interiors via one folding wall system and one large sliding door system, there's now an unmistakable connection between the indoors and outdoors in this home.

"The layout emphasizes openness and flow, and privacy from the street with courtyards and fences creating outdoor spaces that act as buffer zones," John says. "Even though the main bedroom is on the street, the landscaped courtyard between the main bedroom and the front fence makes it feel resort-like."

BREEZES NOW EASILY FLOW INTO THE LIVING ROOM AND KITCHEN FROM THE OUTDOOR SPACE. JOHN DESCRIBES THIS PORTION OF THE RENOVATION, SAYING, "THE MAIN LIVING SPACE WAS OPENED TO THE FRONT COURTYARD AND REAR YARD THROUGH THE USE OF LARGE DOOR SYSTEMS."





Drought-Tolerant Plantings

AMID THE BLACK BASALT GRAVEL, POURED CONCRETE PADS AND PLANTER, AND IPE WOOD DECK AND LANDINGS, THESE ARE THE PLANTS BETH WOVE INTO HER LANDSCAPE DESIGN.

- Himalayan birch trees (*Betula jacquemontii*)
- Foothill sedge (*Carex tumulicola*)
- Silver sheen Kohuhu (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*)
- Silvergrass (*Miscanthus sinensis*)
- Foxtail agave (*Agave attenuata*)
- Fruitless olive trees
- Echeveria succulents
- Dymondia lawn

(ABOVE) THIS PATIO WAS MADE FOR OUTDOOR GATHERINGS. BETH SHARES HOW TO CAPTURE THIS LOOK FOR YOUR OWN HOME: "KEEP IN MIND WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING AT WHEN ENTERING A SPACE, EITHER INSIDE OR OUT. WHAT TYPE OF PATH OR VIEW CAN YOU SET UP TO LURE PEOPLE INTO THE SPACE, BUT ALSO FEEL COHESIVE WITH THE LINES OF YOUR STYLE OF HOME?"



(TOP, RIGHT) EVEN INDOORS, NATURE CAN EASILY BE SEEN THROUGHOUT THIS HOME WITH ITS MANY WINDOWS AND SLIDING DOORS.



(TOP, LEFT) A PUNCHY BLUE FRONT DOOR IS A FUN AND UNEXPECTED ADDITION TO A HOME THAT'S OTHERWISE STEEPED IN NATURAL MATERIALS AND STRIKING OUTDOOR SCENERY; THE BLUE POPS ALONGSIDE THE CEDAR DETAILS.

(TOP, RIGHT) EVENING ARRIVES AT THIS SAN CARLOS ABODE, COMPLETE WITH AN OUTDOOR FIREPIT AND LOTS OF SPOTS TO SETTLE IN WITH A BLANKET FOR A GOOD CONVERSATION.

(ABOVE) THESE STUNNING VISUALS ARE A FAR CRY FROM THE ORIGINAL STATE OF THIS HOME. "THE HOUSE WAS SO CLOSED-UP BY THE PREVIOUS OWNER," JOHN SAYS. "IT WAS CONVERTED MORE INTO A BUNKER THAN A HOUSE AND FULL OF JUNK IN THE BACKYARD [INCLUDING] OLD FURNITURE AND TREE BRANCHES ... THIS WAS SO DIFFERENT FROM THE ORIGINAL INTENTION OF THE HOUSE THAT THE OWNERS SAW CHANGE WAS NEEDED."

AN OUTDOOR UTOPIA

When landscape designer Beth Mullins began to work alongside John Klopf on this project, they shared the same goal: to better connect the home with the outdoors. "My goals for this space were to support the open layout and open flow to the garden courtyard and the back and front gardens that John's interior and architectural design favors," Beth says. "He designed the windows to all look out onto garden spaces; the living room and entry are directly connected to the landscape with door walls that open up fully to connect the living room to the garden."

In addition to choosing plants that will thrive in the arid climate, Beth carefully curated plants that emphasize the home's design. "The plantings support the architecture as plants that will not overgrow and hide the cedar siding nor compete in terms of bulk or color with the architecture," she says.

The exterior spaces are certainly visually pleasing and lend themselves to pleasant times spent outdoors. Beth believes that the inner courtyard is ideal for "contemplative moments" while the back area is "very social in its setup [especially for] lounging, dining, and harvesting veggies."

John summarizes the finished project saying, "It really feels like a nice place to live." 🌿