



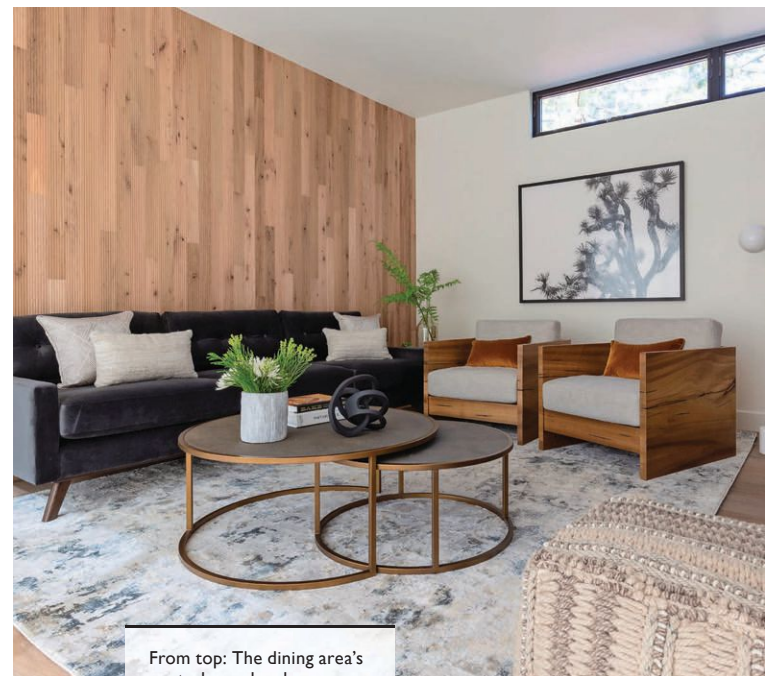
GOING WITH THE FLOW

A high-energy family in a fast-paced world takes refuge in a modern home that inspires calm and connection.

By Jenn Thornton

Not once were the owners of this contemporary Palo Alto abode even remotely ambivalent about their residential needs: “Aesthetically, our priority was simple modern and open with lots of inviting warmth and texture,” says the lady of the house, a tech executive who, together with her husband, is raising three growing girls. “Spaces that, in spite of the open flow, felt like cozy nooks. In a word, organic—an extension of our family.” Less clear was how to execute these details and other dictates of lighting (energy-efficient and as natural as possible) and materials (a low-maintenance trio of stucco, wood and stone) into a cohesive whole.

For this, they entrusted the project to Sarahliz Lawson (sarahlizlawson.com), a Saratoga interior designer/architect whose stylistic goals synced beautifully with those of the clients, a tech-savvy duo with creative inclinations, good taste and a laid-back approach to life. The time was absolutely right for a new house. The cramped family had been living in a “tiny little cottage, bursting at the seams, on a lot they knew they would be scraping one day,” says Lawson. Having been seduced by the weather and easygoing lifestyle of Northern California, the owners—New York City transplants—dreamt of a home built entirely around a swimming pool.



From top: The dining area's neutral wood and woven textures are warmed with abundant natural light; plush and streamlined furnishings create intimate seating areas for conversations.



Clockwise from top left: Spa-quality minimalism in this clean, high-toned bathroom combines contemporary form and function, with a deep-soaking tub, elegant fixtures and a harmonious mood; the striking stairwell offers architectural flair; decorative restraint in the kitchen amplifies the serene view beyond.



Magnanimous though the owners were, their busy schedules and an extremely long permitting process of nearly six years meant patience was thin and the stakes high. Therefore, Lawson shares, “we all knew the design of the house had to be right; it had to check a lot of boxes: a place that both looked and felt good, a reflection of who they were and how they wanted to live their lives now and in the future.”

Today, that is in a spacious 4,200 square feet with five bedrooms, 4 ½ baths, a full basement and a one-car garage, all configured for social engagement and a connection to nature via lots of windows that blur the line between indoors and out. “The floor-to-ceiling glass sliders on two sides of the main-floor living space are amazing,” the wife touts. “Everything indoors is better with fresh air.” Plus, “pool parties are pretty much habitual.” If the kitchen with convenient butler’s pantry is a showpiece of accessibility and organization (a particular treat for this Virgo mom), the master bedroom is a true oasis. Delighting in the space’s aesthetic contrasts—a dark accent wall and concrete pendants—and the pleasure of cozying up by the fire

or with a book in the window seat, she confesses: “Our normal load in life feels 10 pounds lighter each time we walk into the room.”

For Lawson, the house is the physical extension of its owners, “the most welcoming people in the world,” she says, those eager to throw open the doors to others for a drink, a swim or a chat. Therefore, she notes, “they needed a house to respond in kind, with a floor plan fit to receive guests and, aesthetically, with finishes expressing sophistication, elegance and playfulness.” To this end is an infusion of organic accents and wood textures—raked wood for accent walls, Douglas fir for the front door, ipe for exterior siding and white oak plank for flooring—with a masculine balance and, for warmth, furry pillows, knit blankets, deep leather tones, rich velvets and woven chairs. Art also figures prominently. Along with a striking original work by San Francisco graffiti artist Jared Costa are reinterpretations of nature that accentuate the home’s organic feel. “Our place has a calm, restorative vibe,” the wife concludes. “It’s absolutely a retreat. We knew the project was a success when we truly felt on holiday in our home. ■

