



Architecture: Susan Skornicka, Skornicka Designs & Construction, Inc. and Michael Mitchell, Michael Mitchell Architectural Design & Draughting
Interior Design and Landscape Architecture: Susan Skornicka, Skornicka Designs & Construction, Inc. Home Builder: Peter Gubbins, Gubbins Building Company, Inc.



BY SEA AND SAND

In the midst of a dramatic landscape, this Stinson Beach dwelling offers a peaceful retreat at one with its surroundings.

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With its clear Alaskan yellow cedar siding, this Stinson Beach abode sits comfortably against the Bolinas Ridge. Windows and doors by Fleetwood Windows & Doors connect the interiors with the landscape and waves.

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et amid the striking topography of Stinson Beach, this newly constructed vacation home is an oasis of serenity on a slender stretch of sand sandwiched between the waves of Bolinas Bay, the more placid waters of Bolinas Lagoon and the

rolling mountain peaks that hug the area. In this spectacular setting, a couple chose to build a tranquil and welcoming retreat that honors the landscape.

To accomplish this, they hired interior designer Susan Skornicka, whom they had met 15 years prior at a yoga retreat in India and have been working with on remodel and landscape projects ever since. Given this long, layered history, Skornicka was in the unique position to help the couple conceive a brand-new abode perfectly tailored to their desired lifestyle. And, according to the wife, she nailed it. “When I walk through the front gate, I feel like I’ve arrived somewhere very peaceful and supportive,” she says. “This is a place to pause and exhale.”

Skornicka brought architect Michael Mitchell on board, and together they collaborated on the plans that were built by general contractor Peter Gubbins. As envisioned by the design team, the home has an easygoing layout and is quite open, with the living room flowing seamlessly into the dining room and kitchen. Seating areas, each made distinct with intimate furniture groupings, are endowed with floor-to-ceiling windows and sited to make the most of the environs—for example, one is positioned with a view of the bay, while another looks toward the mountain ridge. The number of relaxing spots allows the family to follow the light (or take refuge from it) throughout the day. “Susan created spaces that are both open and expansive as well as intimate and warm,” the wife says.

To craft a soothing backdrop, the designer took her cues from nature, using soft sand and stone tones in light-hued wood, limestone and plaster. Many of the surfaces, such as the lime-plastered fireplace surround and its mantel crafted with a piece of Balinese teak, have the velvety finish of weathered stone or wood and seem to possess a gentle glow.

Skornicka then layered in more subtle textures and colors, nodding to the landscape’s water and foliage. “I wanted to represent the nature of the beach without drifting into clichéd references,” she says. Furnishings—such as a rustic raw wood coffee table and soft flat-woven rugs—were carefully chosen to hit just the right note between elegant and relaxed. All in all, the designer’s selections combine to create a place that’s visually interesting but still restful.

The essence of the home is perhaps best distilled in the comfortable yet elegant dining room. Skornicka felt her clients’ lifestyle did not lend itself to a stuffy formal gathering space, but she also wanted to avoid something overly casual. The designer staged a balancing act by cladding the adjacent kitchen island, which visually appears to be part of both rooms, with limestone and commissioning a table crafted with the same Balinese teak that appears in the mantel. Overhead, a dramatic light fixture composed of sleek, tapered metal pendants resembles a school of fish swimming above the table and rattan chairs. Because those seats are made for outdoor use, they are often called to do double duty for larger alfresco events. “Right on the other side of the windows is the outdoor dining area, so the chairs can easily be pulled outside,” Skornicka explains.

Throughout the house, touches of the bespoke and the natural make for an unaffected interior without artifice. A portion of the entry and the kitchen backsplash are lined with handmade zellige tiles, their surfaces catching and scattering light around. Between the front door and living room, Skornicka commissioned a living wall by Habitat Horticulture, which uses plants found in the gardens she designed for a tight connection between indoors and out. Although the clients were initially skeptical, the feature turned out to be a “showstopper,” the designer says.

Now that the dwelling is complete, the owners see the place as having powers beyond its role as a vacation getaway and spend as much time there as possible. “People come into the garden and the home and find the experience very healing,” the wife says, noting that the peace found here is a gift not just for the eyes but for the soul. ■

The living room's Cisco Home sofa and Four Hands armchairs gather alongside a coffee table and ottomans from SummerHouse made with vintage woods. Resting atop the teak mantel is artwork by Pegan Brooke.





Left: Mitchel Berman Cabinetmakers crafted the white oak kitchen cabinets, which feature Fontainebleau limestone counters from Hausmann Natural Stone and Waterworks pulls. The runner is from SummerHouse.

Opposite: The dining table is made from a piece of Balinese teak found at Malibu Market & Design; it is surrounded by Palecek chairs. The Terizani fixture was chosen in collaboration with lighting designer Anna Kondolf.





Above: In the primary bathroom, Urban Archaeology mirrors hang above Saint Francis limestone countertops from Haussmann Natural Stone. The white oak vanity by Mitchell Berman Cabinetmakers features Waterworks pulls and Dornbracht faucets.

Opposite: A window seat beside the primary bedroom's fireplace is the perfect spot for the owners to curl up and relax. The fabric for the custom bench cushion and the pillows were found at SummerHouse. Artwork by Plamen Tanev accents the mantel.

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The outdoor dining area was kept simple so as not to draw attention from the natural surroundings. Janus et Cie chairs pull up to a table from Eco Outdoors. The lanterns are by Serena & Lily.