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SEA CHANGE

AN INNOVATIVE DESIGN ALLOWS A STINSON BEACH HOUSE TO CONNECT WITH THE LAND AND ITS VIEW.

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When guests receive an invitation to Kenny and Erin Werner's home in Stinson Beach, their visit begins long before the sand is in sight. Often, the couple will have their guests first come to their main residence in Kentfield, which is about a three-hour hike to the beach. "We give our guests a trail map and meet them out there," Erin says of the spirited start to their stay. "You can hike over Mount Tamalpais and then drop down into Stinson Beach. It's always a fun experience."

That kind of adventurous spirit and fondness for nature was evident as the couple set out to build their second home, which is located within the private community of Seadrift. No strangers to building—they had previously commissioned a remodeling and new construction in the area—the couple were excited to find a deep oceanfront property to start their beach retreat. They turned to their longtime architect, Steve Wisenbaker, a one-time Seadrift resident, who envisioned a dwelling that would offer indoor and outdoor spaces along with a strong connection to the beach. He also took into account the area's strict FEMA flood-zone regulations, which ultimately played an important role in influencing the design. "Anything that is in an active wave zone has to be elevated," Wisenbaker says, explaining that a structure behind the zone can be lowered to the ground, but cannot be connected to the elevated building.

Following that line of thought, Wisenbaker developed the concept of dividing the home into three separate structures staggered along the site. After living in a previous



ARCHITECTURE / **STEVE WISENBAKER, STEVE WISENBAKER ARCHITECTS**
HOME BUILDER / **DENNY KASTEN, KASTEN BUILDERS**
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / **ERIN WERNER, ERIN WERNER DESIGN**



Above: Architect Steve Wisenbaker designed a Stinson Beach home for Kenny and Erin Werner as three separate structures. The entrance to the building holding the family room is marked by ceilings of western red cedar from Golden State Lumber.

Right: In the light-filled family room, a Flor rug complements a comfortable West Elm sectional upholstered with a charcoal heathered tweed. The modern coffee table is by Room & Board.





Wisembaker elevated the building closest to the ocean, creating sweeping water views in the living room. A rattan chair by Serena & Lily hangs in the corner, while a Room & Board sofa faces the custom plaster fireplace. The coffee table and wool rug are by RH.



beach home built on stilts, the Werners were eager for a stronger connection to the land and happy to exchange a single structure for the three distinct buildings. Wisenbaker positioned a guest casita at the street level, then another ground-level building with a family room and several bedrooms, followed by an elevated structure closest to the beach that has the main living areas and knockout water views. “You walk through a village of buildings with a series of indoor and outdoor spaces,” the architect says. “What’s wrong with being outside at the beach?”

Erin, a landscape designer, took over when it came to creating the verdant connecting spaces between the buildings as well as establishing a gravel pathway, which meanders from the top of the property down to the beach and allows guests to bypass the family’s private quarters. “It was nice to have a path to circumvent the family spaces,” explains Erin, who paired spiky agave plants with meadow

grasses and other native plants on the site. “It’s almost tropical, so it was fun to play around with different kinds of greenery that I wouldn’t be able to use in Kentfield.” She also used large existing boulders to punctuate the landscape.

Doors from the main rooms of the different volumes open onto the path as it weaves between the structures and concludes in a patio facing the ocean. “You find the sweet spot on the property, make it an outdoor room, and then prioritize the spaces in the house so they are visually and functionally connected to it,” Wisenbaker says. “The patio faces the south sun looking at the ocean, and the house protects it from the wind, so the climate is totally perfect.” The idyllic spot is finished with large concrete pavers, and a fire pit anchors a seating area. An in-ground hot tub provides an additional place for soaking in the ocean views.

On the other side of the patio, a flight of stairs leads to the living room, dining room and kitchen, which are all

The kitchen’s custom cabinetry, crafted by Schriener Woodworking and Art, frames a Monogram refrigerator and range from Pacific Sales Kitchen & Home. Crate & Barrel barstools face the island, which is crowned with a Caesarstone countertop fabricated and installed by Sullivan Countertops.



In the dining room, a pendant by Moooi from YLighting hangs above a wood table and metal chairs by Crate & Barrel. The engineered European oak flooring is from Paradigm Custom.



The exterior siding by James Hardie Building Products from Golden State Lumber frames Loewen windows from Glass Concepts. Erin designed the landscape to include boulders, meadow grasses and native plants.

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-STEVE WISENBAKER

In the center of the master bedroom, a custom oak bed designed by Wisenbaker takes advantage of the view. A vintage poster hangs above a floating oak desk rounding out the space.



within the elevated pod. Above the entry, a cedar ceiling passes beyond the exterior envelope and works with the clerestory windows and large expanses of glass to enhance the sense of connection between the inside and outside. “You have this perch with an unbelievable view,” Wisenbaker says, noting the mitered corner windows of the front façade. “As you walk into the living room, the view just expands in an unparalleled manner up and down the beach.”

According to builder Denny Kasten—who managed the construction of the residence through the eponymous company he owns with his son, Pete Kasten—incorporating the large expanses of glass in that space was only possible because of the heavy steel beams that his crew attached to baseplates. “Structural steel allowed us to open it up and make it look more free-floating than it would otherwise appear,” Denny Kasten explains, noting the lack of interior columns. “It was a reasonably complex house, but, as with

modern architecture, it seems really simple.” Rounding out the living room is a sleek custom fireplace surround, which is sheathed with a plaster tinted to match the concrete flooring in the two other structures.

The fireplace’s clean lines are echoed in the furnishings, which were selected by Erin. “The beach is so beautiful,” she says. “We wanted to keep things simple and make it all about what’s outside.” She selected streamlined metal chairs to surround a wood table in the dining room, which is illuminated by a sculptural Moooi pendant. The space spills into the kitchen, which opens on the opposite side to the living room. There, Erin positioned Serena & Lily’s Hanging Rattan chair in one corner and a Room & Board sofa in front of the fireplace. Along the ocean side of the room, a built-in banquette runs the length of the wall, offering a front-row seat to the water views. “We’re so happy every time we’re out here,” she says. “We’ve been working with Steve for years on various projects, and with this one, he nailed it.”

The master bedroom, outfitted with a chair by Ethan Allen, faces the ocean and opens onto a patio appointed with RH furnishings. The outdoor space provides a connection between the bedroom and the elevated structure.



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