



Amazing Architecture

Walker Warner Architects and Kristi Will Design: Coastal Retreat a quiet, sophisticated oceanfront home featuring contemporary furnishings and art



Walker Warner Architects: There's something singularly magical about the northern California coast, where wildflower-laden bluffs meet the churning pacific and gray whales seasonally leap from the waves. This landscape was like a siren call to a couple, both Massachusetts natives, who craved a return to life by the ocean. The wife wanted the traditional Cape Cod architecture of her childhood, while the husband loves the streamlined simplicity of minimalist design. To strike a balance, they turned to architect Brooks Walker and designer Kristi Will to wed two different visions of seaside living. "We set out to make something unique to them; an expression of all the things they love," says Will of the collaboration.

Beginning with the exterior, Walker invoked an east coast architectural vernacular with peaked roofs, shed dormers and white trim. The architects toyed with traditional lines, designing the asymmetrical gables and minimalistic window frames. "We wanted to create this sense of geometry within these familiar forms that speak to a modern sensibility," Walker explains.

Celebrating the site's natural gifts also became central to fusing two styles. Modern picture windows disrupt the home's traditional squareness with expansive panes of glass that let the outdoors in. Unexpected materials introduce an earthiness to the home. For example, for the iconic Cape Cod-style shingle siding, the design team used reclaimed sinker cypress—a southern wood that spent a century at the bottom of a river, where the elements created what the architect describes as a unique mottled texture. "When you get up close, it has a richness and depth that's unlike anything else," Walker observes.

Embracing nature also guided the landscape design when shaping the outdoor spaces. When driving up to the property for the first time, “all of a sudden, we were sitting on the edge of this beautiful coastal prairie with the ocean just beyond,” recalls landscape architect Ron Lutsko. “It’s something that we really seized upon, to make sure visitors experience this the way we did, but through our design.” To blur the lines between the cultivated and wild, the team incorporated a blend of native grasses and bulbs. “when you enter the backyard, you still feel like you walked straight into the coastal meadow,” Lutsko adds.



To underscore these spectacular views from the interior, the design is composed of a clean white palette that satisfied the husband’s fondness for simplicity, while using traditional materials the wife loved, like whitewashed paneling and soft gray plaster. This resulted in an airy combination that feels expansive when you’re looking through the glass out to the ocean. You don’t even notice the ceiling because everything else recedes away.

The home’s use of stone fuses this connection to the coast, starting with the white granite used throughout the ground floor, which is flamed and brushed to look like beach sand frozen in time. The kitchen employs a Brazilian azul bahia granite for the statement backsplash that adds visual currents of color to the seamless cabinetry. The stone has a beautiful watercolor effect, which creates this relationship to the water.

Inspired by the undulating cliffs outside, Will felt free to select pieces that played with shape and movement. With this in mind, she searched for furniture with sculptural lines, like Vladimir Kagan curved sofas in the living room and bright yellow Pierre Paulin mushroom chairs tucked away in the master bedroom. Though appealing the husband’s love of modern design, these pieces were softened with plush velvets and silks that brought the cozy tactility the wife coveted.

The home also features some of the last pieces created by the late acclaimed architect Zaha Hadid, known for expressing fluid, wave-like gestures in static forms. In the living room, Hadid’s “Ultrastellar” coffee table grounds the space with tide-like ripples carved into walnut, while her liquid glacial table is the centerpiece of the dining room.

With guidance from art advisor Jacqueline Becker, the home's collection is equally dynamic with works such as Leo Villareal's Rothko-inspired led light installation, which bathes the living room in revolving shades of sunrise yellows to twilight blues.



Blurring indoors and out, it's these details that celebrate the natural landscape that first captured the homeowners' imagination. Each room has its own personality but it's all about providing this great backdrop to the view that's happening just beyond.

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