

NATURAL WONDER

A BERKELEY HOME IS REMADE WITH ARTISAN TOUCHES AND FLOWING SPACES THAT ENGAGE ITS SCENIC WOODLAND SETTING.

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ARCHITECTURE / GUSTAVE CARLSON,
GUSTAVE CARLSON DESIGN
INTERIOR DESIGN / CAROLYN M. LAWRENCE,
CAROLYN M. LAWRENCE INTERIOR DESIGN
HOME BUILDER / DAN WOLF, RYAN ASSOCIATES
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / HENDRIKUS SCHRÄVEN,
HENDRIKUS LANDSCAPE & DESIGN

PHOTO: PAUL DYER

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It's a story of craft and artisans and a sense of beauty," says architectural designer Gustave Carlson about a singular Berkeley project that, over a good six years' time, was transformed from a simple 2,000-square-foot shingle-and-sheetrock house from the 1990s into a lush 4,500-square-foot oasis. "I had 54 consultants, so to speak, working through this firm. I would come up with an inspirational design idea, fine-tune it just enough on paper, and then talk with the artisans and craftspeople and say, 'What if we built it like this?' It was a really beautiful way to work."

The property on which the house was set is tucked into a narrow, heavily forested canyon and drops dramatically from the street down to a protected creek. After living in the existing house for 20 years, the owners decided it was time to regroup, yet they couldn't bring themselves to leave

the site. "It was the consensus of our family to stay on this beloved property," says the wife, explaining, "Our kids were about to launch, but we were thinking about expanding rather than contracting. We felt we needed space for them to come home with their partners and families, as well as room for our aging parents to come live someday."

After they connected with Carlson, a 2 1/2-year permitting process ensued. "It was significant because of an ordinance protecting the creek and setbacks from the street," says Carlson. "We figured out how to expand the building on the site to get the square feet we wanted. We were patient and persevered." Stylistically, there were what Carlson refers to as "memory themes" to consider. "We wanted to save what the home represented to the owners and not veer away from some of the intentions of the original architecture, which was low and unassuming from the

Above: Architectural designer Gustave Carlson reimagined a couple's Berkeley house to include a new curved stairway. The elegant design was fabricated by Metropolis Metal Works with patinated stainless-steel rails.

Opposite: An artful tone is established for the house with a pair of intricately detailed doors, which were hand-carved in Bali.

In the dining area, designer Carolyn M. Lawrence chose a C&C Milano fabric for the slipcovers of the Dessin Fournir chairs. Carlson selected pendants by Holly Hunt to hang above a custom table crafted of bleached white oak.



street but taller from the canyon side," he says. "Designing something that looked good from so many different angles was a big challenge."

Carlson met that challenge by wrapping the exterior with Western red cedar shingles that were in keeping with the neighborhood context. On the inside, he reorganized the floor plan to create a new wing that houses a master suite and family room, a lower level for guests, and more of an overall engagement with the woodland setting. "Now you can experience an even larger feeling of indoor-outdoor living," says Carlson, who designed an airy open space on the top level to house the living and dining areas. A walnut ceiling crowns the room, which opens through accordion-folding doors to an expansive deck.

In creating the master suite and new guest quarters, builder Dan Wolf was tasked with digging out under the house to add a new foundation and extend the lower two

floors into the hillside. "We held up the existing structure with temporary steel beams and large shoring towers," he explains. "After we were done with the structural work, we had to crane equipment, including a Bobcat, out of the site. It took a lot of coordination to make it all happen."

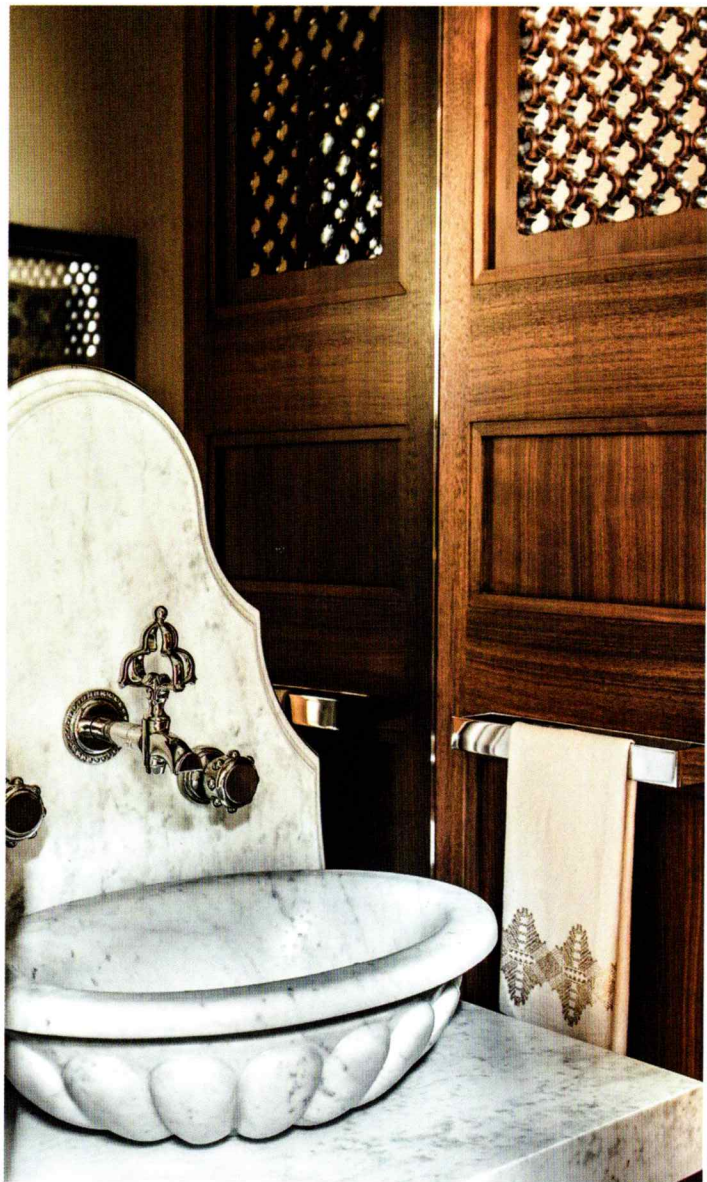
Carlson, who handled the interior finishes and material selections, called upon Santa Monica, California-based designer Carolyn M. Lawrence to lend her expertise and resourcefulness when choosing furnishings that would be both modern and flexible. The two also worked together to bring in layers of interest with thoughtful handcrafted elements. A decorative frieze is carved into the plaster walls of the living area, while striking entry doors were handmade by artisans in Bali. Carved sliding doors and screens were also implemented throughout the home in a nod to the husband's Indian heritage, which also helped inspire the interior design. "The couple have a very

The living area opens through Loewen doors to an expansive deck, which features Janus et C. furnishings. Inside, the custom sofas are upholstered with textiles by C&C Milano. The rug is from JH Minassian & Co. in West Hollywood, California, and J & A Stone and Tile installed the limestone floor.



PHOTO: PAUL DYER

The family room—just off the kitchen which features concrete countertops by Cheng Design—is furnished with a custom sectional upholstered with fabric by Nancy Corzine and ceiling fixtures by McEwen Lighting Studio. A glass bridge, executed by the project's builder Ryan Associates, runs along the top window. First, Last & Always installed the white-oak flooring.



Above: A powder room (left) is marked by a marble sink and an ornately carved door. In the dining area (right), a console chest by Ironies from Kneeder-Fauchère stands on limestone flooring.

Opposite: A hallway located in the master suite vestibule is crowned with fixtures by McEwen Lighting Studio and looks toward an outdoor stairway.

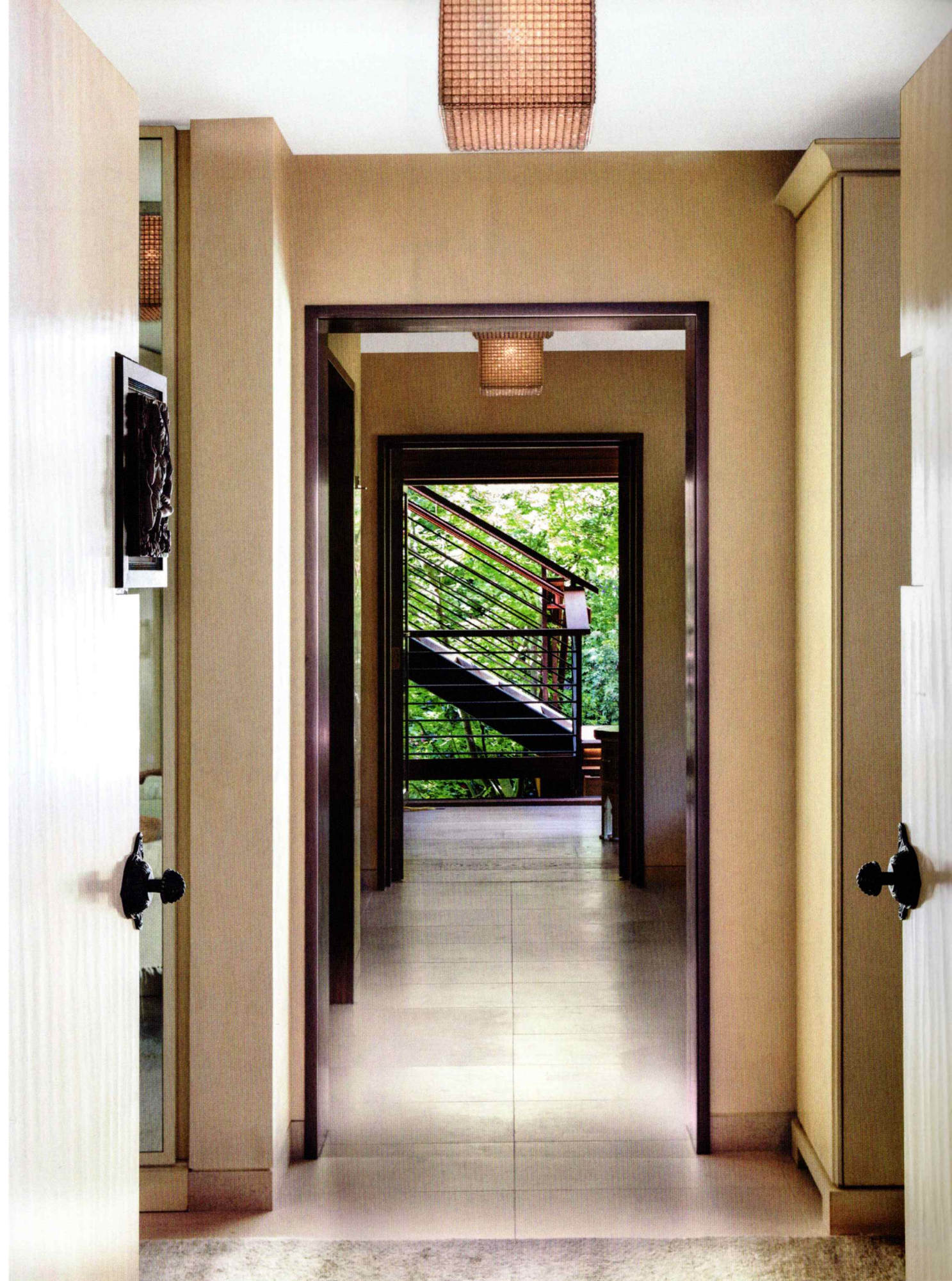
deep connection with Indian and Eastern aesthetics," says Lawrence, who was informed by that sensibility in selecting artwork, rugs and accessories throughout.

Much of the furniture was designed to have multiple functions. In the living area, for instance, Lawrence customized sofas to fit how the owners intended to use the space and paired them with a trio of tables outfitted with trays on top and drawers for storage. A muted rug grounds the area, which Lawrence kept to a "pale and serene" palette. Carlson, who selected the lighting throughout the home, chose streamlined pendants to hang in the living area and in the adjacent dining area, where slipcovered chairs surround a bleached white-oak table. Nearby, a tall white cabinet "is completely fitted with mirrors and shelves for glassware, while the lower portion is made of Makassar ebony and has doors concealing pullouts to hold serving pieces," says Lawrence.

Outside, Seattle- and Hawaii-based landscape designer Hendrikus Schraven gave the grounds an equally

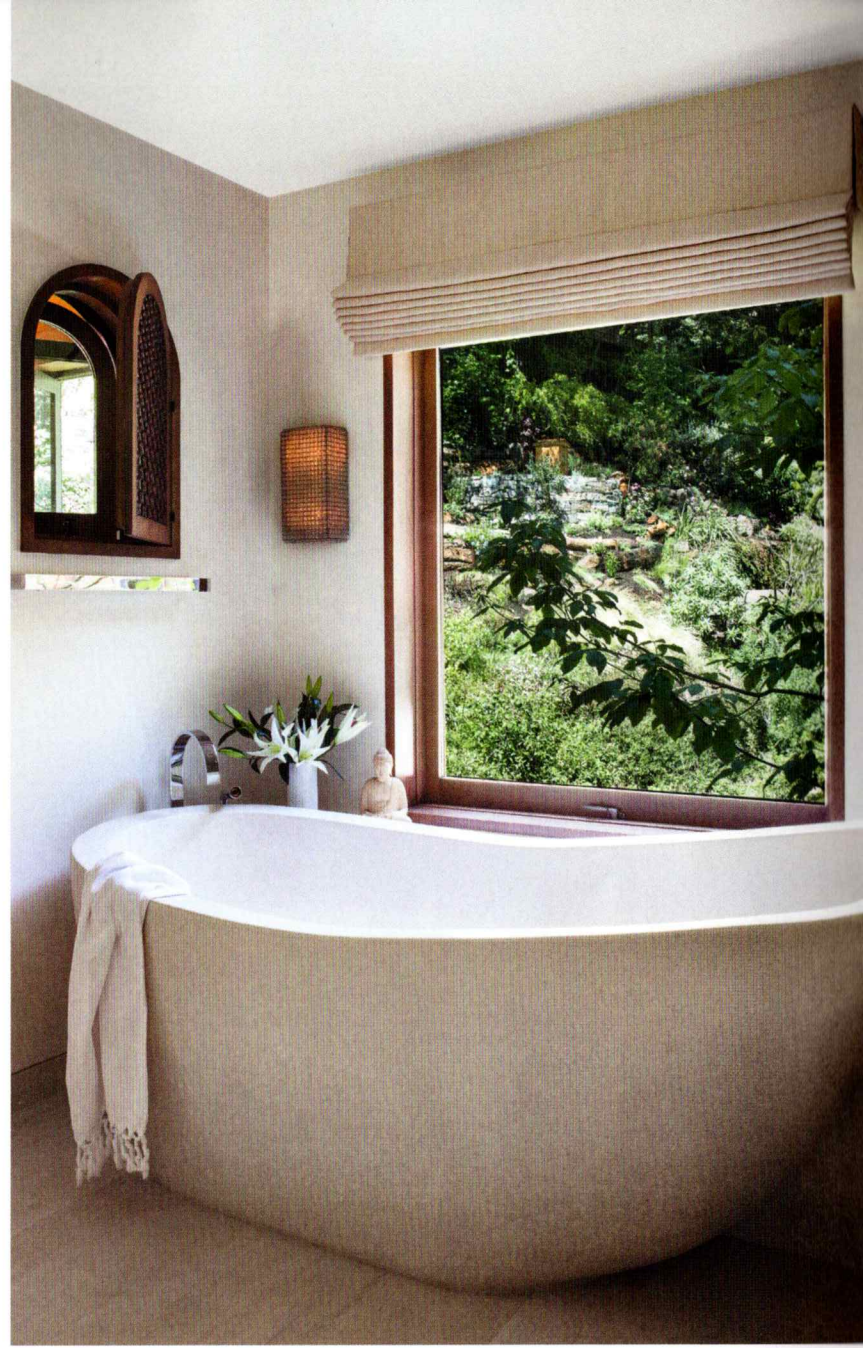
thoughtful makeover. Along with his team—including his brother, Natyam—Schraven craned huge boulders onto the site, integrated custom-blended living soils into the ground, and installed LED lighting and piping for irrigation. "The steep canyon and narrow creek setting created the opportunity for a multilevel experience, both visually and physically," says Schraven. "It allowed for creative natural pathways and was perfectly suited for using massive retaining boulders that add character to the landscape." He also designed peaceful coves that are carved into the hillsides and appointed with handmade benches. "There is a lot of rumble in life, and people often need to escape that into nature," he adds.

Just over two years after construction began, the owners moved in and are enjoying their reimagined home. "It's a quiet sanctuary," says the wife. "Our home is only as good as the relationships it houses, and now it supports the evolving nature and needs of our growing family. More people can now flow comfortably through our home." ■



Opposite: In the master bathroom, the sculptural tub was fabricated by Concreteworks and placed beneath a window by Loewen. The sconces are by McEwen Lighting Studio, and a wooden window detail echoes the screens in the master bedroom.

Below: The master bedroom keeps to the house's calm palette. A woven Indian textile was placed above a custom bed, where a ceiling fixture by McEwen Lighting Studio hangs above. The pendant nearby is by Jonathan Browning Studios. Custom screens carved in Mexico add a layer of interest.



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