

TWICE AS NICE

A MODERN ADDITION
ADDS MORE THAN JUST SQUARE FOOTAGE
TO A MIDCENTURY HOUSE.

BY PILAR VILADAS

On the Pacific Ocean in the Outer Sunset neighborhood of San Francisco — not as popular a residential area as it might sound, because of its foggy, windy climate — stand a 1949 Modernist gem of a house and its sleek, separate addition, in a garden that is enormous by this city's standards. The original house, which was designed by the architect Ernest Born for his own use, faces the ocean dunes on a site that is three lots wide and two deep (real estate was cheaper then). The modest two-story wooden structure has two bedrooms, an open kitchen and a double-height living room that looks into the garden, which is planted with stone pine and cypress trees.

Tom Lloyd-Butler, a hedge-fund manager who is the house's third owner, loved the house exactly

Photographs by Dwight Eschliman

THE BACK GARDEN OFFERS A VIEW OF THE 1949 HOUSE (RIGHT) BY ERNEST BORN, WITH ITS DOUBLE-HEIGHT LIVING ROOM, AND THE NEW CONCRETE-STEEL ADDITION BY MADLIN DARLING DESIGN. THE TWO ARE JOINED BY A GLASS BRIDGE. SLIDING GLASS DOORS DISAPPEAR INTO THE WALLS TO OPEN THE ADDITION'S ROOMS, INCLUDING THE SECOND-FLOOR MASTER BATH, TO THE GARDEN.









ABOVE: THE HOUSE AND ADDITION SEEN FROM THE STREET. BELOW: SUNLIGHT AND TREES CREATE DEEP SHADOWS ON THE GLASS BRIDGE. OPPOSITE: IN THE ORIGINAL HOUSE, THE LIVING ROOM'S ARCHITECTURE, INCLUDING THE LOW BENCH AT THE WINDOW AND THE WOOD-SLAT WALL SYSTEM FOR HANGING ART, WAS INTACT. THE DESIGNER STEVEN MILLER USED BOTH VINTAGE AND REPRODUCTION MIDCENTURY MODERN FURNISHINGS FOR THE ROOM, AS WELL AS LUCITE SHELVES OF HIS OWN DESIGN. THE ORANGE NEOPRENE COVERING ON THE CARLO MOLINO CHAIR IS A SLY REFERENCE TO THE OWNER'S LOVE OF SURFING.







ABOVE: ON THE ADDITION'S THIRD FLOOR, THE FAMILY ROOM HAS AN OCEAN VIEW. A VIEW FROM THE GARDEN, THROUGH THE OPEN SLIDING DOORS, INTO THE FIRST-FLOOR REC ROOM, WITH ITS RACK OF SURFBOARDS. AT THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE, A WOOD-SLAT FENCE AND CYPRESS TREES SCREEN THE ROOM FROM THE STREET. THE TRAVERTINE-TOPPED COFFEE TABLE AND CHEST OF DRAWERS WERE DESIGNED BY ERNEST BORNI FOR THE EXISTING 1949 HOUSE. THE SOFA BY JENS RISOM WAS ALSO PART OF THE HOUSE'S ORIGINAL FURNISHINGS.

as it was — essentially unchanged since Born built it. So when he needed more space to accommodate his two growing sons, himself and his partner, Dan Zelen, who owns Zelen, a design store in Los Angeles, he wanted to tread lightly. He was introduced to Aidlin Darling Design, a local architecture firm, by Steven Miller, who created the comfortable, midcentury-tinged interiors of the original house. “Tom wanted a minimal intervention in the existing house,” says Joshua Aidlin, who designed the addition with David Darling and Michael Hennessey.

The architects came up with a freestanding building that is connected to the existing house at the second floor by a glass-walled bridge. The 1,850-square-foot addition contains a rec room with surfboard storage (this is a family of avid surfers) on the first floor, a master bedroom and bath on the second and a family-media room on the third; each floor is open-plan to maximize light and views. On the windy ocean side, the top two floors offer chances to check out the surf (the dunes block the view from the first floor), while on the garden side, sliding glass doors retract completely, making the structure seem like a giant treehouse. These rooms, while relatively small, “seem much larger because of the availability of the outdoors visually,” Aidlin explains. Indeed, one of the best things about the new building is that it — like the original house — occupies so little of that outdoors, wisely diverging from the current bigger-is-better approach to house design and reminding us that small is indeed beautiful. ■

