Less is More

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CLIFF HOUSE

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN MANN

The design of Architects Hanna Gabriel Wells for a new residence in Mission Beach was inspired by the bluffs that rise above the coastline to the north and south, but perhaps not in a way one might think. This team saw the new three-story residence of Miyo and Mitchell Reff as a solid form that, like the cliffs, had eroded over time.

“This process of careful subtraction,” says lead architect Jim Gabriel, “provides a variety of exterior balconies, terraces and courtyards for taking in the natural elements and extraordinary views while maintaining privacy in a densely populated community.”

“When we discussed different ideas for the house, someone

Left: The master bedroom’s glassed-in sunset terrace commands wrap-around views of the sea and the coastline north and south of Mission Beach.

Opposite: A water feature, succulent garden and copper-shingled wall greet visitors to Mitchell and Miyo Reff’s contemporary home.
A sleek fireplace warms the second-floor living room, which segues to the kitchen. Flooring is fossil-embedded quartzite. To right of the living room is the dining area.
came up with the idea of eroded bluffs, and everyone got behind it,” Gabriel says. “The clients were quite open to new ideas and let us know in the review process if they liked or did not like things we brought to them. The one thing they were definite on is that they wanted a clean and modern design.”

The Refs’ beachfront home is anchored around an entry court with a jackknifing steel staircase that floats above a reflecting pool. The main residence sits above an 800-square-foot basement constructed of bead-blasted masonry and cast-in-place concrete walls that visually anchor the house and integrate with the house’s raised upper stories.

HGW used a minimal palette of textural materials, including copper, cement plaster, stone and pebbles, which complement the simple forms of the home and its living spaces.

“For the interior spaces,” Gabriel says, “we wanted to create a spacious feeling within a limited area by borrowing views, capturing reflections and filling the spaces with daylight. Natural stone and wood materials provide a visual warmth that complement the open design.”

Green elements in the project include high-efficiency heating/cooling equipment; use of natural daylight and ventilation throughout all spaces; VOC-free paints and sealers; recycled and fully recyclable content for

Right: Stairs made of compressed-straw boards rise to the home’s main living quarters.
Above: Glass walls slide open to unite the terrace and dining room.
Opposite: Architects Hanna Gabriel Wells designed the home’s maple and cherry cabinets. Eco-friendly strategy was employed throughout the project.
the exposed-concrete flooring on the ground floor and the concrete masonry walls; renewable bamboo flooring on the third floor; and fluorescent lights in 80 percent of the spaces.

Storm water is naturally cleaned through planting areas before it is released back into the environment. Aluminum windows are recyclable. Bathrooms and the kitchen feature water-saving fixtures and Energy Star appliances.

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Opposite clockwise from top: The Evening Terrace on the second floor offers a counter to enjoy before-dinner cocktails while watching the surf, the passing boardwalk parade or, perhaps, a green flash. River-washed pebbles make a spectacular statement in the master bathroom. The master bath commands some of the home’s most dramatic views.

This page top: Vita bed in master suite references Modernist era.

Below left: An Edo nine-drawer dresser from Thomas Moser below a flat-screen TV in the master bedroom.

Below: Owner Miyo Reff with builder Rich Gerace and architect Jim Gabriel.