

FROM DATED *to Dazzling*

For this West Shore home, it is what's on the inside that matters



Written by Sylas Wright

Photographed by Paul Dyer

Exterior before and after photos of a ground-up renovation on Tahoe's West Shore would be indistinguishable. In fact, the classic Tahoe home, with its substantial back deck stretching toward the lake, is essentially a spitting image of the original structure built in 1961. That's because of a rule in Chambers Landing, where a rebuild must retain the home's original footprint and exterior aesthetic.

The rule does not apply to interiors, however, and that is where the home's transformation took place.

"The original home was very dark and outdated—think dark woods and green shag carpet from the '60s," says interior designer Jennifer Macdonald of Jennifer Robin Interiors.

Macdonald, whose firm is based in San Anselmo in Marin County, teamed up





A travertine slab used for the kitchen backsplash features veining intended to echo the ridgelines of the surrounding mountains

on the two-year project with Tim Chappelle of San Francisco-based Arcanum Architecture and George Pasvantis of Tahoe City's Pasvantis Construction.

After the roughly 3,000-square-foot home was taken down to its studs and rebuilt—with a higher ceiling on the lower floor thanks to excavation work—the team was tasked with creating a new interior with reconfigured floor plans on both levels. New finishes and furnishings were added, aiming to achieve a “modern industrial lake house vibe,” says Chappelle, who opened up previously cramped spaces and replaced the original heavy glulam construction with exposed steel.

At the same time, the revamped living quarters had to be as durable and functional as they were stylish in order to suit the homeowners' active, lake-playing lifestyle. For example, custom dining benches were made from a stain-resistant Villa Nova fabric that the owners tested beforehand with red wine and dirt.

“We're pretty casual people; we've always got kids running in and out and people around,” says the homeowner, whose family includes three young children and a black Lab. “Having owned a place in Tahoe for a while, we knew how we liked to live up there, which is lots of swimsuits and T-shirts and bare feet. And the interior design is so beautiful, but it's also really functional and not fussy. It's also very comfortable. We love it.”

While the owners had specific ideas in mind for the renovation, they also allowed Macdonald and Chappelle—who

designed their primary residence in Menlo Park—plenty of creative licensing.

“The homeowners were amazing. They were extremely trusting and gave us tremendous freedom and space to create their home,” says Macdonald. “They were very clear with their vision and receptive to new ideas. As a second home, they were also willing to take a few design risks and trust us with those key decisions, which was really wonderful.”

Although the interior has a distinctly fresh, modern feel, Macdonald also sought to ground the home to its natural surroundings through the use of rustic materials, which blend seamlessly with the contemporary finishes. Antiques, reclaimed wood cabinetry, cedar ceilings and custom-stained white Douglas fir paneling mix with oak floors, concrete countertops, and velvet furniture. Select pops of blue emulate the lake's famously rich hues, while other thoughtfully selected colors reference the scenic mountain landscape framed through the windows.

In the kitchen, cabinetry and window frames are painted in Farrow & Ball's Studio Green, a deep color selected for its connection to the forest. A travertine slab was used for the kitchen backsplash, its veining echoing the ridgelines above the lake. In the nearby dining area, Macdonald designed a sleek, circular light fixture made of metal, brass, wood and rope to hang over the table, which sits under a vaulted portion of the ceiling. A wall of windows affords views through the trees to Lake Tahoe's blue expanse.

“The [light fixture] design works particularly well in this space as it allows the views to shine through without being blocked in any direction, and its round shape and rope add a nautical vibe that we love,” Macdonald says. “It's one of our favorite lighting designs and makes a beautiful statement piece without overpowering the room or blocking the views.”

The living area shares this open and airy great room space, which is divided visually by exposed metal beams running the length of the ceiling. On either side of the dining table, the kitchen and living area have glass doors that open to the sweeping deck overlooking the lake, where a fire pit, barbecue, bar and hot tub await. Also on the top floor is a mudroom and media room that was formerly the master bedroom, which is highlighted by a giant mural of a blue fish. The sofa here converts into a bed for extra sleeping space.

Among the more personal and fun touches in the home, Macdonald designed an oxidized maple puzzle table for the owner that doubles as a dining table extension when feeding a big crowd. It's set in front of the slider doors in the living area, providing grand views for those willing to belly up to a patience-testing challenge. “There's always a puzzle in progress



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on that table,” says the owner.

The interior design even accounted for the owners’ four-legged family member in the form of a dog crate built into a wall of cabinetry on the stair landing. The staircase leads to the rebuilt lower floor, whose ceiling was raised from its original sub-8-foot height to around 9 feet, says Chappelle. All the bedrooms reside here, including the master and guest master suites and two kids rooms equipped with reclaimed wood and metal bunk beds. A small covered porch with a row of rocking chairs provides sheltered privacy off of the guest master.

While Macdonald and Chappelle successfully transformed the home from its dark and dated former self to a stylish new lake house, everyone involved with the project agrees that Pasvantis was instrumental in executing the overall plan.

“George was great,” says Chappelle. “He’s a can-do kind of guy who

makes things happen, and I think he did a great job of pulling the team together and fulfilling everybody’s needs and wishes. He made it very easy being a long-distance job. He did a great job.”

“Honestly,” adds the owner, whose family was living in London during the renovation, “our team on that project was the dream team between the three of them. People ask us, ‘How was that building a house while you were out of the country?’ We could not have done it without that team. They are all just top notch at what they do.” 

AWARD: Interior Design

Building Design: Timothy Chappelle of Arcanum Architecture

Builder: George Pasvantis

Interior Design: Jennifer Macdonald of Jennifer Robin Interiors

Square Feet: 3,000 (approximate)

Year Complete: 2016