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SEPT/OCT 2017 | DISPLAY UNTIL 11/13/17



ARCHITECTURE / GEOFF PRENTISS, PRENTISS + BALANCE + WICKLINE ARCHITECTS
INTERIOR DESIGN / MIKE POWERS, MIKE POWERS DESIGN
HOME BUILDER / RICK DALGARNO, DALGARNO CONSTRUCTION, INC.



FAMILY AFFAIR

STRAIGHTFORWARD MATERIALS, RELAXED FURNISHINGS
AND A STUNNING SETTING MAKE THIS COMPOUND
AN IDEAL MULTIGENERATIONAL RETREAT.

WRITTEN BY MINDY PANTIEL / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN GRANEN

The dining area of a vacation retreat where three generations routinely gather for meals features a table long enough to accommodate 14 and benches to supply most of the seating. “Who wants to straighten 12 chairs three times a day?” muses Los Angeles-based designer Mike Powers about his no-nonsense approach to outfitting a family compound in the San Juan Islands. “It was the practical considerations of dealing with two grandparents, six grown children and four grandchildren that drove the design.”

In the 1990s, when the now-grandparents first purchased the site that contains their vacation compound, such matters didn’t exist, and the two small houses on the property were more than adequate for weekend retreats with their children. But the advent of their progeny marrying and having children of their own changed everything, and, according to Powers, who has worked with the owners for two decades, the impetus to expand took center stage. “They kept the cottage where they planned to reside and sought to replace the other building with something large enough to accommodate everyone else,” he says. “They wanted the new house to be discreet, reference the barns and sheds typical on the island, and have a rural-industrial flavor.”

Responding to the request for understatement, architect Geoff Prentiss and project architects Dan Wickline and Brian Watzin decided to have the “whole house face away from town” and emphasize the waterfront views instead. “The entrance has no real street presence, and there are no windows on the north side,” Prentiss says of the unassuming approach where the entire reclaimed-barnwood-and-rusted-steel materials palette is revealed. The simple elements repeat on the back side, where rows of windows peering out over the rolling green landscape to the water make the gable-topped buildings—a nod to those barns and sheds—come alive. “Everything is angled to maximize the sun, light and the views,” Prentiss adds.

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What looks like a series of distinct buildings is actually four connected structures with a central core that houses the living and dining rooms and kitchen. On one side, what resembles an outsize barn is outfitted with a glass door that lifts to reveal a covered outdoor living room. “This way they can be outside even if it’s rainy,” Prentiss says. On the opposite end, two separate guesthouses link to the social core via a series of indoor corridors. The structures are dressed in a mix of Cor-Ten steel and weathered siding. As builder Rick Dalgarno tells it, “The Cor-Ten steel was easy to get, but it took five trips to a distributor to handpick all the wood siding. Most of it is oak from East Coast tobacco buildings, and the pieces had to have the right gray look and color consistency.”

The home’s humble street face opens onto a similarly rich materials palette, notably beadboard walls painted black and durable concrete floors. “It was the wife’s idea to have a black foyer. She’s not afraid to go bold and wanted something dramatic,” Powers says. According to the architect, it was also her brainstorm to leave exposed the plywood framing that defines the soaring living room ceiling. “She preferred the textural quality of the wood framing and plywood over sheetrock, so we ended up having to build a second roof over the existing one and placing insulation in between,” Prentiss says.

Not surprisingly in a space with 24-foot-high ceilings, furnishings are overscale, and two 9-foot sofas facing each other, along with a third 12.5-foot model on the far end of the room, provide plenty of seating for the whole clan. “Twelve people need physical and psychological space, and big, simple pieces were the way to go,” says Powers, who covered everything in chocolate brown chenille and added understated rust and orange accents. “The quiet colors are meant to reference things like the tree bark and stone of the natural environment. When you have this many people routinely in one space, you don’t want things to be too busy.”

But other subtle interjections of color and pattern appear, most notably in the form of antique rugs displayed as wall hangings that conceal the doors leading to the guest bedrooms. “The homeowner didn’t want to be aware of all the doors, so we hung rugs on rods that pull back easily and help soften the space,” Powers says. In a twist, he created unique hexagonal tile floor patterns for each of the bathrooms. “They help make each guest suite individual and take the place of a rug,” he says.

It was such thoughtful, practical solutions (along with the cafeteria-style table with retractable stools in the kitchen and impervious concrete floors that can be stomped on with impunity) that made this house a place where families want to gather. “When they are here, no one has to worry about hurting anything,” Powers says. “Everything is special, but nothing is precious.” ■



In a San Juan Islands home conceived by architect Geoff Prentiss, designer Mike Powers chose a Circa Lighting sconce and an RH chandelier to illuminate the entryway, painted in Benjamin Moore’s inky Ebony King. Builder Rick Dalgarno’s company fabricated the door, which incorporates a vintage wood panel and a handle from Rocky Mountain Hardware. The hanging kilim is from One Kings Lane.



Above: Arranged in front of the great room's fireplace made of locally sourced stone are a pair of RH chairs and a coffee table from Horseman in Brooklyn, New York. The custom area rug is by Tai Ping. Some of the stones in the fireplace are un-grouted and can be removed to reveal hidden outlets.

Left: Circular chandeliers by Circa Lighting are set at the height of the bridge to make the great room feel more intimate. The hammered-copper table from Blackman Cruz and the leather ottomans from Mosaik Interiors were both finds from Los Angeles. Powers designed all three sofas and covered them with chenille by Calvin Fabrics. The floor lamps are from The Antique and Artisan Gallery in Stamford, Connecticut.

Circa Lighting fixtures line the outer perimeter of the kitchen, while lighting by Schoolhouse Electric hangs from the beadboard portion of the ceiling. Accenting the space are cabinet pulls by Rocky Mountain Hardware, RH stools and a breakfast table by Get Back. The space includes a Kohler faucet, a Miele dishwasher and a Viking range and oven.



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Wood from Delta Millworks in Austin, Texas, creates a dramatic backdrop in the great room's dining area, which is slightly elevated to differentiate it from the space's living area below. A custom stone top sits on an RH base to form the dining table; the host chair and benches are also by RH. Joining the vignette are a copper candle stand by Robert Kuo and artwork by Rufino Tamayo. Oak from Carlisle Wide Plank Floors is underfoot.



NorthStar WoodWorks supplied the doors, and Window Craft supplied the windows that line the home's rear façade. The Adirondack chairs and ottomans from Crate & Barrel provide seating for waterfront viewing. Two RH sofas wearing Perennials textured linen are tucked under the covered area that can be enclosed with glass-front NanaWall doors. Barn Light Electric fixtures provide visibility at night.

This page: As with all the guest rooms, the space dubbed the "Cottage Bedroom" is simply furnished. The bed rests on a striped wool rug and is joined by an upholstered wing chair and dresser, all from RH. The ceiling fixture and sconce are both by Circa Lighting.

Opposite: Daltile supplied the wall and floor tile for the space known as the "Treehouse Bathroom." The vanity and medicine cabinets are from RH, and the sink and shower fittings are by Waterworks. A sconce by Circa Lighting and a Schoolhouse Electric fixture over the Kohler tub complete the look.



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