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HEAVEN ON EARTH

Designer Eugenia Jesberg used her home's beautiful views of the Belvedere Lagoon as the starting point for her fresh design. »

BY LAURA HINE
PHOTOS BY JACQUELYN WARNER

Previous page: Designer Eugenia Jesberg with her dog, Nell. This page: The soft blues and yellows that accent the living room are reflected in the large abstract painting by John DiPaolo.



We're water people — that's what brought us to Belvedere," says designer Eugenia Jesberg. "We always wanted to live here on the lagoon." When Jesberg and her husband, who is an avid sailor, started looking in

Belvedere, they lived in Mill Valley, where the designer has had her firm, EJ Interior Design, since 1993.

Her professional expertise meant that when the couple found a house that had been built in the 1960s and left untouched, they weren't daunted. "This house had no curb appeal — zero, zip, nada," she says with a laugh. "It had good enough bones and a great location, but it was very dark, with lots of brown paneling."

The couple, who have two adult children, bought the house and moved in. "That first year, I just painted everything white, so we could

live with it," she says. "Over that year, we worked with our architect, Marshall Schneider, and got the plan and permits in place."

Then, they tore down much of the existing structure, and replaced it with a house that not only embraces its lagoon views, but also enhances

the family's enjoyment of the water, with ample outdoor space and easy transitions between the indoors and outdoors.

"The gardens were bonsai and gravel, and the front patio was all concrete," Jesberg recalls. "We created outdoor rooms with the firepit, a dining area, a lounging area off the primary bedroom, and my vegetable and cutting gardens."

An avid gardener, Jesberg delights not only in her beautiful perennial beds, but also in her garden's bountiful harvest of peaches, lemons, limes and herbs. Dahlias and roses keep her



Refinished vintage Adirondack chairs surround a custom firepit.

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home in flowers all season long.

For the rest of the family, the firepit and enlarged dock are draws to the outdoor space. “It’s cool here at night, so we use the firepit a lot,” she says. “And since my husband really likes his boats, a generous dock was a must.”

When they took on the big renovation, the couple decided that less was more. Instead of the original five bedrooms, the home now has three, which gave Jesberg room to add a walk-in closet to the master bedroom and to enlarge the master bath, which she says used to be “the size of a telephone booth.” She completely reoriented the kitchen, which used to face a carport, and opened it up to the dining room.

When planning the renovation and design, Jesberg made sure her husband liked the plans and overall direction, but she didn’t consult with him on the design details. “He’s definitely the money guy, and I



The dining area features an iconic Fun Chandelier Light by Verner Panton, a table by Robert James and chairs custom designed by Jesberg’s firm.

Jesberg refinished and reupholstered the comfy fireplace chairs in a flame stitch textile. The art over the mantle is by Robert Kingston.



was respectful of that, just as I would be with a client,” she says. “We had a budget and I made sure we stayed within it.”

The trickiest space to furnish was the living room, because it’s the passage between the front door and the outdoor living space. That traffic pattern couldn’t be changed, because the couple wanted to preserve the home’s original woodburning fireplace. “I have swivel chairs at the fireplace that you can turn to be part of the main seating group,” she says. “It was important to keep both flow and comfort.”

One aspect of the renovation that required no compromise was the decision to open the public rooms as much as possible to capture the beautiful views of the lagoon. Jesberg made sure the furnishings complemented the outdoor palette.

“You don’t want to compete with Mother Nature,” Jesberg says, but notes that she also didn’t want the house to read as nautical. “I can’t have theme-y in my house. There’s another way to reference water and that feeling without being so literal.”

Instead of anchors and fishing nets, Jesberg used the blues and grays of the water mixed with lots of white and natural wood. Punches of color come from her carefully chosen art and accessories.

“My aesthetic for this house was sophisticated coastal,” she says. “It didn’t need to scream, ‘I’m a beach house.’”

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