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A NATURAL TAKE ON DESIGN

A Santa Lucia Preserve Home
Harmonizes with the Landscape

BY MICHAEL CHATFIELD





Perfectly blended into its pristine Santa Lucia Preserve setting, “Taronga” expresses Mike and Patty Stone’s love affair with Australian art and the California lifestyle.

Photo: Paul Dyer Photography

At last count, there are 132 completed homes in the Santa Lucia Preserve, a sublime 20,000-acre luxury residential enclave. One of the newest is “Taronga,” the home of Mike and Patty Stone. Designed by Craig Holdren of the Monterey firm Holdren + Lietzke Architecture, this project is a textbook example of how a healthy and productive client/architect collaboration can attain a superbly satisfactory end result for all parties.

“We were considering purchasing a Pebble Beach property that needed renovation,” Mike says. “The Realtor introduced us to Craig. One of the things I liked about him right off the bat was that all he wanted to talk about was us, to get a sense of our lifestyle. He was gathering all the right kind of information.”

When the couple opted to purchase this six-acre Preserve lot and build from the ground up, they knew who to call. Their respect was mutual.

“What I liked about Mike and Patty is that they had lots of ideas of what they were interested in, but they were abstract,” the architect says. “The things they articulated were big picture. They started with general possibilities and let us come back with specific concepts.”

For instance, Mike was adamant about having no glass in the showers (“I hate squeegees,” he jokes.) and Holdren responded with designs for expansive shower areas that obviate the need for glass doors or walls.

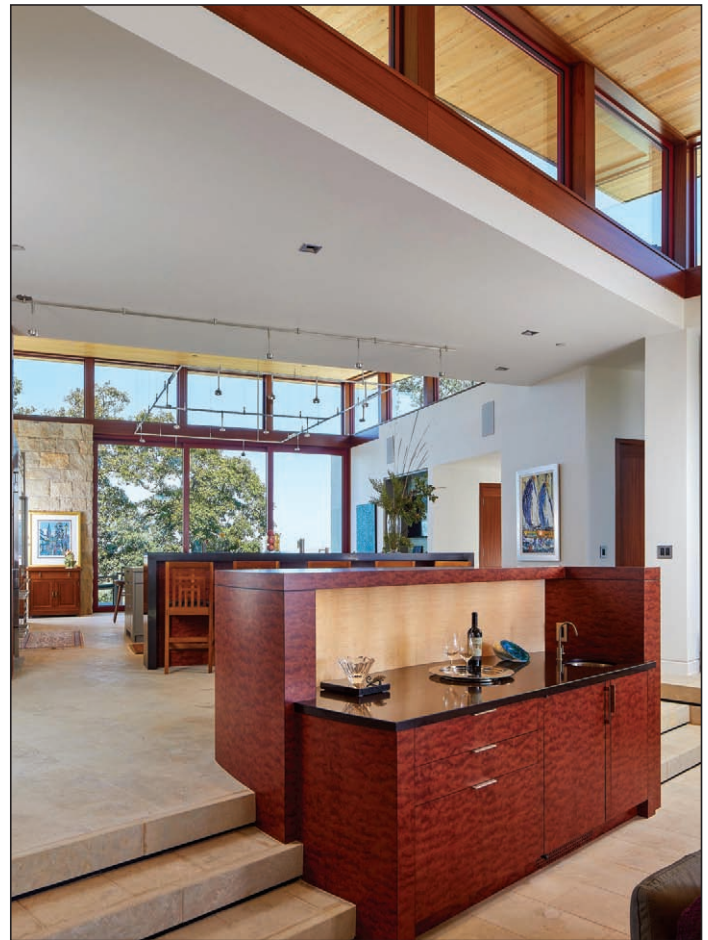


Photo: Paul Dyer Photography

Soaring ceilings and acres of windows satisfied the Stones’ desire for open spaces and abundant light and volume. Architect Craig Holdren took great care in maintaining the integrity of the site’s native live and valley oak trees, leaving most in situ.



The entire northern living room window opens, enticing visitors to the patio, pool and magnificent views. A creative use of materials blurs the line between the interior and outdoor spaces.

Photo: Abraham and Paulin Photography



Photo: Abraham and Paulin Photography

Taronga's guest house is separated from the main house by a cozy outdoor sitting area. The arrangement provides privacy for both hosts and visitors. "Every guest we have says they've never slept better than they do here," says Patty Stone.

Mike approves: "I could play handball in there." Another imperative was the Stones' desire for lots of light and volume, and they got that as well. In spades. With another big laugh, Mike says, "We have a ridiculous number of windows."

Holdren's design takes full advantage of the mountaintop site's 2,100-foot elevation.

"The lot offers diverse experiences from east to west," Holdren says. It looks over a rugged wooded canyon to the west while the eastern side affords views of the Salinas Valley with the Garland Ranch fire tower in the near distance. Great care was taken to retain as many of the site's original trees to maintain the natural feel of the land. Some of those trees are valley oaks, a deciduous variety that gives up a view of the Monterey Bay during winter their leaves are shed. Another tie-in to the natural environment is the home's red-trimmed windows, a reflection of the autumn leaf color displayed by the region's prolific poison oak.

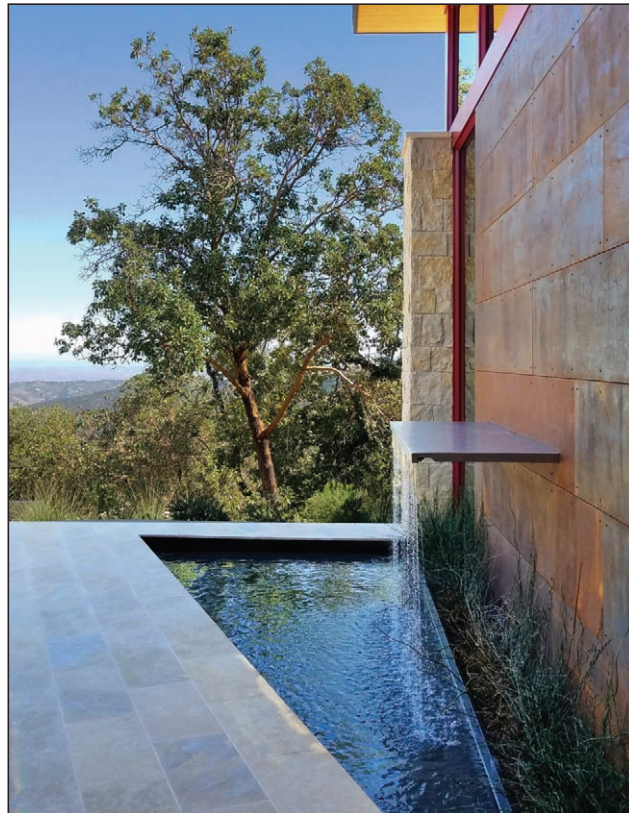


Photo: Craig Holdren

A burbling fountain adjacent to the front door has attracted a family of frogs whose songs fill the evening air.

Mike and Patty resided in Australia for six years before settling into their new Preserve home this year; and the architecture the couple experienced in that country while living in Sydney and

Melbourne helped inform the design of their new California home.

"'Taronga' is an aboriginal word meaning 'beautiful view,'" Mike says. "It seemed appropriate in recognition of our time in Australia, and the Aussie al fresco feel of this house." The name also dovetails perfectly with the art the Stones collected over the years that currently graces many areas of the home.

"Mike and Patty brought an extraordinary collection of aboriginal art. They provided photos and dimensions and that was very much a part of the conversation," Holdren says. "It was wonderful to work with. In my opinion, the art ties the house together."

Also from the Stones' Australian experience is the wide-open vibe to the entire home, especially the living room and adjacent kitchen and dining

areas. East and west walls are made up of enormous, floor-to-ceiling windows that slide into wall pockets, creating a seamless transition from indoors to out. Adding to that feel is the fact

that materials—including flooring and the stone walls—carry through from interior to exterior. It's a perfect set up for entertaining. The living room is punctuated by a colorful contemporary abstract painting commissioned from Big Sur artist Greg Hawthorne.

In order to retain the bucolic rural sense of The Preserve, its architectural review standards are strictly maintained. Holdren and the Stones came up with creative solutions to every one.

"I wanted the garage to be hidden, but in order to maintain the integrity of the ridge line,



Photo: Abraham and Paulin Photography



Photo: Paul Dyer Photography

Top: Just off the well-equipped kitchen, the patio provides glorious views of the sunrise. Bottom: The Stones commissioned Big Sur artist Greg Hawthorne to paint “The Preserve” for their living room, complementing their collection of Australian art.

we were limited to a single story,” Mike says. “Craig’s solution was to bury it into the hillside and cover it with a green roof planted in yarrow.”

Another requirement was that there could be only one outbuilding, and that was fulfilled by the small studio that sits next to the patio’s gorgeous infinity pool and spa.

“Mike and Patty also wanted separate guest quarters,” Holdren says. “So, I came up with the idea of a covered patio between the two structures, effectively making them one.”

Serendipitously, that patio has become a focus of the Stones’ daily life. Comfortable seating faces a generously sized wood burning fire-

place for chilly evenings and fans keep things cool on warm ones.

“We weren’t sure the concept was going to work,” says the architect. “But now I think it’s one of the best spots in the house.”

To see more of the work of Holdren + Lietzke visit hl-arc.com.