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ART IN DESIGN



FRAMING THE VIEWS

ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN: MARMOL RADZINER

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The winding road leading to the house that California architects Leo Marmol and Ron Radziner recently devised in Annapolis, Maryland, is lined mostly with split-level and Colonial-style homes that, in effect, present the new design as a kind of modernist spectacle. But for however wonderfully understated the house appears, its dynamism—the way it blends with and frames the natural landscape—is its most remarkable quality. “The landscape is a constantly changing element that provides a foil to the steady presence of a structure,” says Radziner, who, as he always does, took a holistic approach, treating the architecture, the interiors and the landscape as a single design. “Landscape has the ability to not only complement a building, but to interact with and strengthen it,” he says.

Indeed, nature is never stagnant, but the Annapolis landscape might be busier than some others. “We’re right here on the bank of Whitehall Creek,” says one of the residents, the husband, who owns a home development business. The wife, who is working toward a degree in Clinical Nutrition and Integrative Health, says, “There are beaver, river otter and Canada geese, and recently I saw two bald eagles while sitting in my office.” The waterfront woodland setting—an undeniably cinematic scene—is alive with many more creatures, too. “There’s a blue heron that comes to fish from the pond outside the living room,” the husband says. “We’ve seen a piebald deer and her fawns along the shoreline of the creek. And when the creek was last frozen, we saw a skulk of foxes running back and forth on the ice.”

The couple had always desired a home with a strong connection to the environment. “We wanted a house on the water,” the husband says. “I love to fish and I love the calm that comes from being this close to nature.” Before purchasing the lot, they lived on another creek-front parcel a few doors down. “We had our eye on this site because it sits higher up and has better views,” the husband says. “One day it went up for sale and we bought it.” Then they rented a nearby residence while they oversaw the construction of the home they’d always wanted. “The house that was here was too dated to keep,” says the wife, who began the design-build process by hiring Annapolis-based Bohl Architects. “The frame was in place when I called Marmol Radziner,” she says. “I’ve always loved their work.” The four-inch binders she filled over the years with photographs of Marmol Radziner designs are proof of her affinity. “Three quarters of the images are of their buildings,” she says.









The husband and wife now experience their own Marmol Radziner design on a daily basis. And like many of the houses the architects have created, it displays materials that meld with the textures and colors found in nature around it.

On the exterior, mostly glass walls are interspersed with natural stone, ipe and anodized bronze cladding. One of the ipe walls pierces a glass wall and continues on the interior, sectioning the dining room and linking the inside with the outside. The natural stone is also featured on the interior, most prominently on the massive fire surround. Walls and partial walls made of walnut add more texture and warmth to the interior rooms, which include a double-height living room, an open kitchen with a lounge area, a formal dining room, a loft-like library, his and hers offices, three guest rooms and a spacious master suite. "The clients wanted a house that would support their love of entertaining," Radziner says. "The home also has a custom wine-tasting room, an outdoor bar and fire pit and a pool." A basement-level living-and-bar area, a screened-in porch and an outdoor conversation area near a private dock on the creek provide more places to entertain. "We go out to dinner a lot, too, and typically, we go by boat," the husband says. "There are restaurants just down the creek by the bay."

As you move through the house, different perspectives are revealed via the glass walls and strategically placed windows, which act like apertures that capture various woodland scenes. "The home embraces garden spaces in nearly every direction, maximizing visual connections and relationships to the outdoors," the architect says. Radziner and Erika Montes, the firm's Interiors Studio Director, worked with the residents to select vintage, new and custom furniture pieces that tie to the architecture and the natural environment. "The clients have an appreciation for midcentury aesthetics so we used some iconic pieces and newer production pieces with a nod to the midcentury design era." They outfitted the lounge area in the kitchen with an Eero Saarinen-designed Womb chair and a custom coffee table topped with tile by Heath Ceramics. For the dining area, Radziner chose a Lindsey Adelman chandelier, rosewood-and-leather Cantu chairs designed by Sergio Rodrigues, and a walnut-and-bronze table from Blackman Cruz in Los Angeles. "The clients' tastes lean toward the sculptural," Radziner says. "That statement chandelier informed the rest of our choices for that space."

When it came to color and pattern, Radziner and Montes used few prints and employed tones found in the landscape. "It's an array of materials and fabrics that are organic and earthy," Radziner says. "We kept pattern to a minimum and used a variety of textures like mohair, felted cashmere, glazed leather and silk to create visual interest." In the living room, Flexform sofas wrapped in tobacco-colored mohair, Jorge Zalszupin armchairs with honey-colored leather, and a silvery silk rug complement a large custom marble-and-brass coffee table. When you're standing or sitting inside the Annapolis home that Marmol Radziner designed, you feel a part of its woodland setting; there's little delineation between the interior and the natural environment. "The landscape and interiors are integral parts of our architecture practice, allowing building and site to become an expression of a singular vision," Radziner says. It's a rich fluidity—one the clients dreamed of having for years. "You know, some people get excited about the idea of meeting Brad Pitt or George Clooney; I wanted to meet Leo and Ron," says the wife. "This house is special. Every day I'm appreciative of the fact that I get to live here." ■
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