



1. The home's owners wanted a stark contrast to their historic Victorian in the Mission, where they live during the week.

2. A long corridor flanked by a dramatic slatted eucalyptus solar screen leads from one wing of the house to the other. Both ends feed onto ridgeline trails. "The house is intentionally designed to propel you back out into nature," says architect Neal Schwartz.

Turn Toward the Light

A MODERNIST MARIN HOME WITH AN INSIDE-OUT PERSPECTIVE.

BY LAUREN MURROW

IMPROBABLY, THIS SWATH OF NICASIO wilderness provides a microcosm of San Francisco: The city that used to be a refuge for hedonists and hippies is now a playground for tech transplants. Likewise, these 40 acres, once the site of the getaway—and psychedelic parties—of the Grateful Dead, is now the weekend retreat of a tech entrepreneur and his family. The couple were past their own youthful rebellion, but, in keeping with the land's free-spirited history, they were seeking a funky escape where their two sons could roam outside uninhibited.

Surrounded by rambling streams, grassy trails, and mature oaks, this isn't your typical manicured Marin lot. The home is fronted by a dramatic, 100-foot-long glass hallway, which architect Neal Schwartz, who headed up the project, planned to shield from direct sun with a





wooden solar screen. After testing half a dozen varieties of wood for the job, none of which warped as desired, Schwartz reconsidered. He decided to embrace the weathering process with eucalyptus wood, a local invasive species. “Architects hate it,” he says bluntly. “It’s weak, and it moves like crazy under duress.” He and the project’s structural engineer developed a loosely connected system of eucalyptus slats that will allow the wood to morph naturally in the rain and sun. Thus, the home’s name: Crook | Cup | Bow | Twist, after the four categories of wood deformation.

The windowed corridor was purposely left bare, highlighting the shadows cast by the staggered wood. And rather than proofing the home’s facade against the rugged landscape, Schwartz gravitated toward steel and cedar, materials that will fade, rust, and patina naturally over time.

By design, this is not a house to hole up in. “Everything about it propels you outside,” says Schwartz. He deliberately avoided the typical bird’s-eye view, instead tucking the sizable five-bedroom into the crook of a hill—a natural cleft that divides what the builders dubbed the “tame” and the “wild” sides of the property. Each end of the house feeds onto trails forged years earlier by a horse-boarding facility. Upon crossing the home’s threshold, you’re confronted with a picture window that frames the crest of the hillside beyond. “You’re not even looking at the architecture,” Schwartz gloats. “You’re slapped in the face with that hill.” □

3. The fireplace screen is patterned after the original architectural model of the home’s solar screen.

4. Sheets of acrylic are layered within the powder room’s concrete wall, creating a “crazy discotheque effect” when the sunlight hits it, says Schwartz.

5. The home is nestled at the base of a hillside, where it’s barely visible from the nearby road.

6. The loosely strung eucalyptus slats protect the house from southern sun exposure and will twist and warp naturally over time.

