

A photograph of a modern rooftop terrace. In the foreground, there are wooden lounge benches with dark cushions. A wooden pergola structure with horizontal slats is visible at the top of the frame. The terrace overlooks a cityscape with a large weeping tree on the left and a swimming pool area in the background. The sky is clear and blue.

SWEET HOMECOMING

SERENDIPITY FINDS ARCHITECTS
TAKING A NEW APPROACH TO A HOME
THEY DESIGNED IN MISSION HILLS

BY PHYLLIS VAN DOREN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY UNDINE PROHL







IT'S A RARE OCCASION when a couple hosts their wedding reception with a Champagne toast to their newly renovated home.

When Blake and Dove Kirby got married last August in Presidio Park, they walked a few blocks with their guests to the multilevel property Safdie Rabines Architects had completed for them and celebrated both their marriage and their house.

Coming down the street from above gives you a hint of why the residence was named Wave House. The design of the top level — in what might have been a flat roof — curves up like a wave to make the approach visually appealing.

Taal Safdie and her husband, Ricardo Rabines, knew the house well: They had built the home on a steep hillside lot for the original owners in 2004. "It was one of the more elaborate homes at that moment that we had done," Taal remembers.

When, a few years later, Dove and Blake were looking for a Mission Hills property to buy, "We spotted this house looking up from Old Town and knew we wanted it," Dove says. The house wasn't for sale, but their real estate agent contacted the owners — and it soon became their property.

Left: The great room on the lower level of the main house features Safdie Rabines' custom furniture covered in a mix of velvet-textured Romo fabrics. Niches were updated with Romo wallpaper.

Previous spread: A terrace off the great room offers a view of Old Town and beyond.





They didn't know who had designed the house, but a chance call to Safdie Rabines for an interior designer revealed them to be the architects. Both homeowners and architects were thrilled to meet over the project, and an initial idea about just choosing new furniture expanded to a major renovation.

The house responds to its steep canyon site with a design that steps up the hill to a three-story main house. The lower level is a two-story great room nestled in the hill that opens out to terraced gardens, a guest casita, swimming pool and tea/yoga room. The family, dining and kitchen areas are street level to maximize views toward San Diego Bay. The master suite is located alone on the third level, topped with a gently curving ceiling that seems to float above its glass walls.

The 4,200-square-foot home maximizes bay views by incorporating a 35-foot-long, light-filled atrium that acts as the horizontal and vertical axis, connecting all three levels of the house while engaging the main entry with the gardens and view outside.

The only totally new building is the casita that overlooks the pool and has a rooftop deck that connects to the main house via

The atrium connects all three levels of the house. The upper level includes the master bedroom suite. Louvered panels allow light and air to pass, while adding a striking element of design.







velvety texture. Many of the Romo textiles used on custom seating and pillows have the same texture. Using bright colors and a rich mix of patterns on the furnishings achieved a fresh look to the rooms.

"We already owned the big Roche Bobois sectional leather sofas, and they fit into the scale of the new house perfectly," Dove says.

Clearly pleased with the outcome of the finished project, Ricardo says with enthusiasm, "The house opens up to the view of Heritage Park and the bay with a flying roof." ❖

A gas fire pit makes the deck on the guest casita roof a cozy place to sit after the sun goes down.



a small wooden bridge over a water feature. The citron and aqua of the Paola Lenti outdoor furniture perfectly complement the water-conscious plantings on the hillside.

The pool below is the organic shape of the original, but with a new tile edging and interior surface. The tea/yoga room was created by refurbishing the inside of an old building on the property. Its powder room has been redone with a floor medallion inscribed with the name Bella Terrazzo, commemorating a trip to the Amalfi Coast that reminded Blake and Dove of their hillside in San Diego.

Through a gate and farther down a gravel path is a mini-orchard of plums, apricots and peaches and a vegetable garden and guinea pig coop where Dove would like to add chickens. This also is where solar panels are hidden.

In the main house, many of the interior finishes were upgraded, like the kitchen counter and cabinet faces of 3form Ecoresin. The custom dining table with integrated stripes of color also is made of a 3form resin.

The Romo wallpapers used in several areas to great effect are a variety of graphics with a raised

Left: The rooftop deck of the guest casita is furnished with Paola Lenti outdoor seating.

Facing page: The various levels of the home make a dramatic statement from the back looking up the hillside.



A corner of the upper level landing overlooks the rooftop deck of the guest casita and a wide view to Point Loma. The glass walls also make it a great spot for the homeowners' cat to nap in the warmth of the sun.





Top: Awning windows on opposing sides of the casita visually enlarge the space.

Bottom: The expansive master bathroom features a deep-seat tub and oversized shower.