



The owners of an airy woodland retreat can fit its caretaker in a pocket.

A Meadow With Amenities

Project / Ranch OH Architect / Feldman Architecture Landscape Architect / Bernard Trainor + Associates Location / Carmel, California

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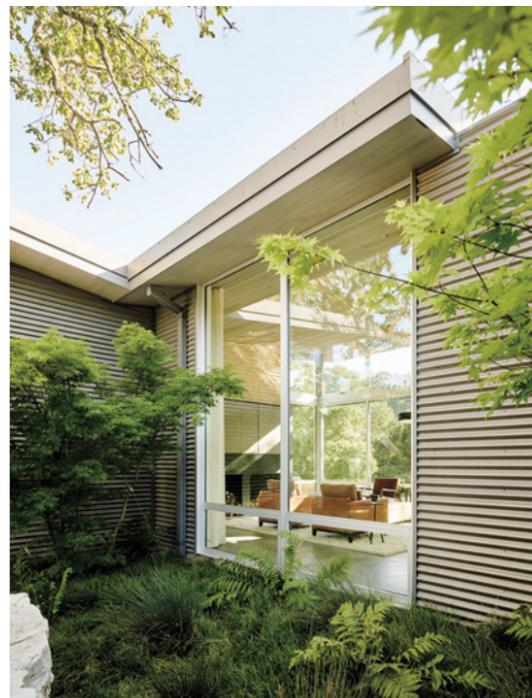


When the residents of this weekend home in Carmel, California, approach the property, the house's smart-tech systems prepare the dwelling for their arrival by turning on the heat and

lights and opening the blinds. Wildlife are frequent visitors here, but the area's active woodpeckers aren't very welcome, so the house is clad in corrugated metal siding by Recla Metals (opposite).

Overhangs around the perimeter help prevent interior heat buildup and glare (below left). A Savant system gives the residents centralized control of the lighting, heating, audio, and more. Mitcie unwinds in a Linden chair by Holly Hunt in the living room (below).

The dining area features sliding glass doors by Fleetwood (opposite). Interior designer Toni Ambus paired a reclaimed sycamore table by Dekayu with Lea dining chairs by Roberto Barbieri for Zanotta. A Broom pendant by Brand van Egmond lights the room.



As Mitcie Hanson and her wife make their way from Los Altos, California, to their weekend retreat in Carmel's Santa Lucia Preserve on a chilly Friday afternoon in late fall, Mitcie pulls out her iPhone to prepare the house. With a few taps on the Savant Pro app, the radiant heat is switched on, external blinds are opened, and selected lights are illuminated. And because the Jacuzzi has been heating up during the two-hour drive, the travelers will be able to head straight into the restorative waters upon arrival. Come Sunday, a few commands and a touch of Lutron's Away button (on the phone or on the keypad by the door) shut down the house until the next visit.

The preserve, an old coastal ranch once known as Rancho San Carlos, will never see more than 300 residences built on its 20,000 acres of sweeping hills, redwood groves, pine forests, savannahs, wetlands, and wildflower meadows. Although the nine-acre site where Mitcie and her wife chose to build their home is particularly remote—13 miles from the stone gatehouse—the couple were not seeking an adventure in Luddite living. In fact, they are as connected here as they are back home, in the heart of Silicon Valley.

"There was always an assumed technological integration in every version of the future they painted for us," says architect Jonathan Feldman, whose firm has designed a clutch of modernist houses in the preserve.

"For them, a retreat was going to be, 'My house works off my iPhone, and we're cozying up to an Apple TV movie.'" At the same time, the couple—whose primary residence is wired for only television and music—wanted to keep it simple. "We were actually a little intimidated by the idea of a 'smart house,'" allows Mitcie, who worked for a major tech company (where her wife is an executive) for 20 years before becoming a massage therapist. "At first we wondered, is this going to make our lives easier or more complicated, with more things to learn and manage? Jonathan convinced us that we could control how deep we wanted to go, and that it would actually make our lives easier," she says. "And he was right."

To seamlessly integrate and embed the technology elements, Feldman brought in Jay Bakaler, whose company, Metro Eighteen, has designed smart-tech systems for three houses in the preserve. He devised a setup, layered on an AV rack and stashed in a hall closet, that allows the couple to control everything from audio to lighting. On top are products supplied by Access Networks that support the wired and wireless networks (wireless access points are concealed in niches throughout the residence). The next layer features two proprietary Savant-enhanced Apple Mac Minis (one for backup), which support all the entertainment and caretaking capabilities, including the >



"The lone valley oak in some ways defined the shape of the house," says landscape architect Bernard Trainor. The structure wraps around the century-old tree, forming a courtyard with a series of fiber-cement chairs by French designer Julia von Sponeck.



"The landscape is the star and the building is more the background."
—Jonathan Feldman, architect

Lutron lighting system, drapes, climate, pool, and surveillance cameras (which Mitcie and her wife opt not to use in the protected preserve). The next shelf down holds the AV source components—in this case, Apple TV, satellite DVR, and a Blu-ray DVD player. And the AudioControl amplifiers for all speakers rest on the bottom. Everything can be controlled on-site or remotely with any iOS device, and an iPad is hard-wired into a hallway wall for extra security.

The system was designed for easy maintenance and management. Assures Bakaler, “If there’s a problem, we can troubleshoot most issues remotely, without sending out a truck.” Mitcie adds that they’ve been known to email Metro Eighteen’s service team when they need help figuring something out. “They work it out with you very quickly,” she says.

Although Ranch OH (so named by combining the initials of the last names of its owners) is imbued with sophisticated technology, its spiritual heart is a massive valley oak born sometime around World War I. It was clear to the architects, Feldman and project manager Brett Moyer, and the landscape architects, Bernard Trainor and project codesigner Ben Langford,

that the tree should engage in an intimate dialogue with the house, which surrounds it on three sides. And Mitcie, an avid home chef, quickly claimed it as the focal point of her future kitchen window.

From the modern nest-like structure, the outside world is not so much kept at bay as invited in. The dining room is bound on two sides by sliding glass doors that disappear, creating a kind of breezeway, and the bedroom opens onto a deck that merges into the grasses. “This very thin building just slices through the landscape: You feel as though you’re outside when you’re inside,” says Trainor.

For the couple, Ranch OH isn’t just a neatly tricked-out retreat; it’s a base camp for exploring nature—from hiking up to a grassy knoll to drink wine and admire the sunset, to experiencing the preserve, the Carmel coast, and Big Sur on all-day outings—far outside the range of cell phone service. Because sometimes, disconnecting is the greatest luxury of all. □

“When the residents are inside, they are looking out—at the hills, the trees, and the sunsets. They craved a visual retreat.” —Jonathan Feldman

Concealed speakers from James Loudspeaker, scattered throughout the indoor and outdoor rooms, let the residents stream music from their phones. A trio of love seats and a coffee table from Henry Hall’s Tru/Pure collection form another outdoor room.

In the master bath, a Duna pendant by El Torrent hangs above a Blu Stone tub (below). Sloped ceilings, covered with stained Western red cedar, add warmth to the interior (bottom). “We set out to design using the best of what modernism has to

offer, but to try to execute that in a way that is livable and home-like,” says architect Jonathan Feldman. The bedroom contains an A. Rudin bed and a Beau chair from Room & Board. It opens onto a deck with an aluminum awning.

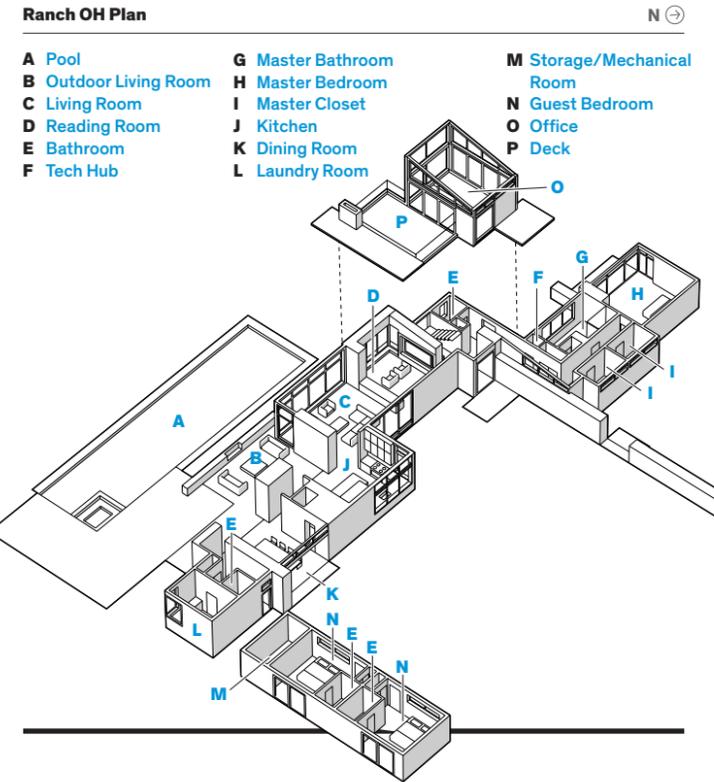


ILLUSTRATION BY JASON LEE

