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Bay Area Eccentric

A house with a pinwheel-shaped plan becomes a wide-open home for two art and design collectors.

The spiraling floor plan of Robin and Fred Seegal's Sausalito home created a kaleidoscope of sightlines after architect Mark English removed most of the interior walls. Every vantage point highlights the owners' art

collection, which includes (above, from top) screen prints from Andy Warhol's Campbell Soup series, Tom Wesselmann's 1965 *Nude*, and Deborah Kass's riffs on Warhol, 2012's *Yellow Deb* and 2000's *Blue Deb*.

backstory

Descending at a 45-degree angle and emitting a soft whir, a single-carriage tram glides down a Sausalito hillside dappled with foliage. During the two-minute ride along the steep Northern California topography, its glass dome and clear walls frame a massive horizon where San Francisco Bay meets the sky. Trams are the only way to navigate certain parts of Sausalito, where homes are submerged beneath a high tide of fog that rolls in before dawn and burns off into spangled sunlight by late morning. But on this particular day, as the carriage comes to a halt, there is no fog, just a frieze of high clouds softening the peak of Angel Island in the distance.

Here, at the base of the hill, local architect Kirk Hillman, known for Napa's Meadowood resort, sited a pair of unusual

houses. He designed them as fraternal twins in the mid-1980s for a pair of clients, one of whom had a passion for boat-building. Dubbed Lighthouse I and Lighthouse II, both were laid out in a pinwheel shape with a hexagonal floor plan that spirals up three floors to a crow's nest. New York-based art and furniture collectors Fred and Robin Seegal acquired Lighthouse II in 2014. They were attracted to it not so much for its shape, but because they were intent on "living up the tram," says Fred.

The couple hired San Francisco architect Mark English to renovate the 3,100-square-foot house. "These types of homes were inspired by places like Mendocino and Bolinas, where people were moving back to the land, to live off it, grow pot, and build their own places," says English. Though it had eccentric charm, with a >



"The most difficult thing about the house is that when you're trying to communicate with someone, you can't tell where they are." FRED SEEGAL, RESIDENT



In the living room (opposite, top), Fred sits beneath Tom Wesselmann's *Claire's Valentine Banner*, from 1973. A George Nelson Yellow Marshmallow sofa from 1956 joins a Darrell Landrum coffee table, also from

the 1950s, and a pair of Verner Panton Cone chairs. In the sitting room (opposite, bottom), more pieces from the couple's collection—a red George Nelson Coconut lounge chair and a blue Adrian Pearsall chaise rocker, to name just

two—share space with a pair of Alex Katz screen prints that had enclosed the kitchen (above). The home sits between a steep slope and San Francisco Bay (top).



Changing Tides

The history of Lighthouses I and II

- **1969**
Land parcel 65-303-22 is created on the steep, rocky Edwards-Harrison Tract in Sausalito.
- **1979-81**
Builder and boat designer Ian Moody purchases the lot and subsequently sells a portion of it to Barry MacKay and Michele Martin. Architect Kirk Hillman designs a pair of "descending pinwheel" houses for them.
- **1986**
Dubbed Lighthouse I and II, the completed houses are among the southernmost properties in Marin County.
- **2014**
The Seegals buy Lighthouse II and ask English—who designed a house higher up the hill that the couple had bought a few years earlier—to renovate it.
- **2015**
The renovation begins, with most building materials brought in by boat.
- **2018**
Lighthouse II is complete. The Seegals purchase Lighthouse I, and English begins its renovation.

backstory

In the master bedroom (right), a circular bathtub sits next to a full-height window with a view of Angel Island. It's joined by a Vico Magistretti & Mario Tedeschi floor lamp from the 1960s. A lip-stick sculpture by Kelly Reemtsen anchors the view north toward Tiburon. The Seegals encouraged English to leave the seismic steel frame exposed, to give the white interiors a slightly industrial look.



Construction materials were brought to the site via the dock (left). A section of the living room (below), with a view of the San Francisco skyline, is punctuated by a suspended chair

by Eero Aarnio from the 1970s and a 1965 Verner Panton seating landscape. A tram (opposite) ferries passengers between the house and the road above.



wooden structure and cladding, sloping eaves, and oddly shaped, compartment-like rooms, Lighthouse II was largely closed off from the outside. English devised a design that would open it up to light and views while keeping the pinwheel plan and otherwise preserving the home's quirkiness.

Because the house clings to a cliff in an earthquake zone, English replaced its original timber frame with seismic steel. He pulled down interior walls and raised the eaves to install floor-to-ceiling windows and sliding glass doors. He also removed two fireplaces that were blocking the view to the east. With its walls

stripped away, the kitchen and its lavender quartzite counters are now entirely open to the living area. "The second floor, specifically the kitchen—which is Fred's center of gravity—has a 180-degree view of the bay, from Tiburon to the San Francisco skyline," says English.

This opening up has also generated unexpected moments in the interior, which is more like a sequence of spaces than a series of rooms. Instead of being defined by walls, changes in function are indicated by furniture, artwork, floor and ceiling height, and light levels. Even rooms that flow into one another can abruptly

change heights. All of this creates a subtle but constant shift in perspective. Visitors make small discoveries going from one area to the next, seeing the same bayscape or artwork in a different way.

Beautiful as it is, the site itself proved to be the most challenging part of the two-year renovation. Most materials—structural steel, windows, doors, concrete—had to be brought in by barge and either craned in or carried up from the dock. But for the Seegals, having this view was worth all the effort. Last year, they acquired Lighthouse I, and English is about to start the process all over again. ■



ILLUSTRATION: LOHNES + WRIGHT

