

PRIVATE PARADISE

Local designers create an R&R retreat in RSF

By Kimberly Cunningham
Photography by Robert Benson



There are pretty houses, and then there are next-level *dream* homes. File this under the latter. Inspirational, aspirational, and just generally gorgeous. Styled by Esteban Lopez and James Niebling (pictured) of Esteban Interiors, the sprawling yet understated property in Rancho Santa Fe serves as a second home for a couple based on Manhattan's Upper East Side. This is their escape from the city's hustle, so the designers took great care to make the setting as tranquil as possible. Today it stands as a virtual private resort. Read: poolside loungers, a tennis court, and quiet paths through verdant landscaping.

Inside, warm natural materials, like walnut, rosewood, and pieced hair on hides, blend with the updated ranch-style



BUILT
1962
LOT
2.19 acres

STATS
5,466 square feet
with 4 bedrooms,
5.5 baths, and a
detached guesthouse

↑
The living room features layers upon layers of texture, from the pieced cowhide area rug (Aja Rugs) to the grasscloth wallpaper and custom sofa's upholstery. "It resembles the bark outside," Lopez explains. "Lollipop" chandelier by Porta Romana, leather ottoman by Cisco Brothers, "Prismatic" fabric by Groundworks from Lee Jofa



In the den-office, the designers created custom bookcases to display the homeowners' collection of Pre-Columbian art. At the room's center stands a swoon-worthy vintage chaise by the late Vladimir Kagan. The designers upholstered it in an earthy red mohair. "Ike" suspension light by Delightfull Lighting, petrified stump table by David Allen Collection



← In the detached guesthouse, Lopez and Niebling designed a custom portiere to separate the sleeping and living spaces. The living space includes a built-in fridge and other kitchen amenities hidden behind custom cabinetry.

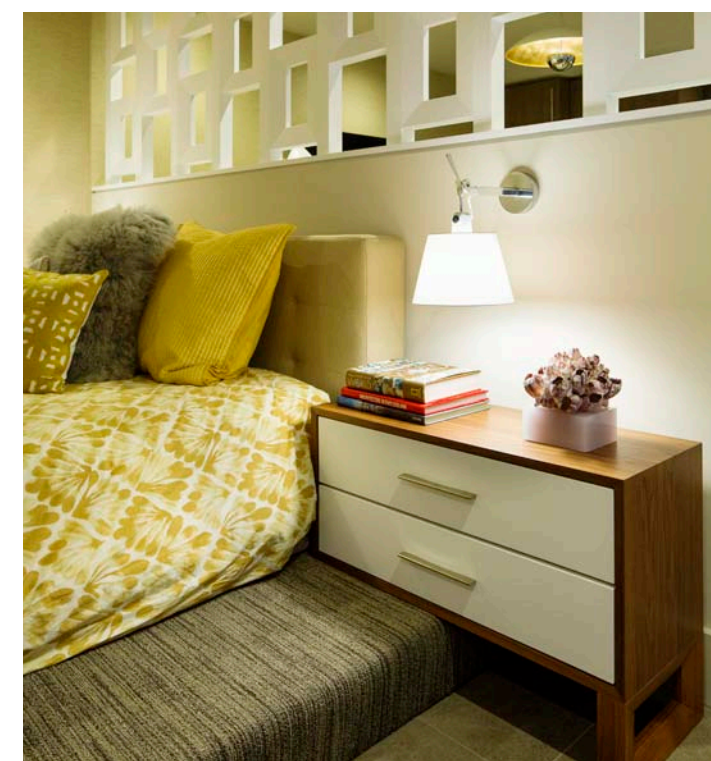
architecture and refurbished midcentury furniture. The color palette is mostly neutral, thanks to the creamy gray walls and ceilings (Pale Oak by Benjamin Moore). "They wanted something very organic," Niebling says. "We lent pops of color with drapery and art."

Even the powder rooms are chic. The one nearest to the main entry features an entire wall, floor, and baseboards made of quartzite. It also boasts a custom mirror with sandblasted edges and backlighting, a design firm signature that emits a soft "flattering glow." Elsewhere in the house, the bathrooms have heated towel racks and heated floors, warding off the post-shower chill.

"It was a Rancho Santa Fe beater," says Lopez, looking around and taking in the dramatic transformation. The designers worked with architect Kevin Jorgensen and Lang Contracting on the project. The collaboration produced unique elements like the decidedly off-center mantel in the living room. "This beam was in the kitchen," Lopez explains. "We worked with the architect to save it and changed the shape of the fireplace to accommodate its asymmetry." The traditional stucco fireplace was completely redone, resulting in what Lopez describes as a more "sinuous" look.

Adding to the resort-like feel are the living room's accordion doors, which make for a seamless transition to the outside. The exterior living area, complete with a flat-screen, fireplace, and living plant wall, is a perfect spot to entertain and take in the lush surroundings. Meanwhile, a detached guesthouse, custom designed with a sleek kitchenette and bathroom, can accommodate extra visitors.

And really, who wouldn't want to visit this place? We would like to check in and never check out.



→ The guesthouse's elevated bed and cutout nightstands are set on a platform, which creates a modern look and also helps with sound mitigation. A peek inside the suite's French doors offers a wide view of the bedroom and sitting area.



Link loungers and tables, shaded by Tuuci umbrellas and anchors, make for understated poolside perfection. Dive in!

The expansive backyard, designed by Schnetz Landscape, features gardens of salvia and rosemary, set among a forest of palms and other mature trees. Most of the plants are drought tolerant and require little maintenance.



"THE YARD IS DESIGNED SO YOU CAN COME AWAY FROM THE HOUSE AND IT FEELS LIKE A RESORT."