GHOST STORY

WRITTEN BY CAREN KURLANDER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW MILLMAN

"IT WAS WHAT PEOPLE CALL A 'GHOST WINERY,'" SAYS DESIGNER JEFFRY WEISMAN, OF THE SAN FRANCISCO FIRM FISHER WEISMAN, REGARDING THE HUMBLE BEGINNINGS OF HIS CLIENT'S NAPA VALLEY RESIDENCE. "The structure of the house was built from old Napa Valley stone in 1880. It had been constructed as a winery but had been abandoned for most of the 20th century." The two-story building was remodeled into a house in the 1980s, but the workmanship didn't do the structure justice. "There was a roughness everywhere," says Weisman. "It had exposed plumbing, really distressed farm floors and hollow-core 1970s doors. There was nothing of quality in the interior that you could keep." So Weisman, along with principal Andrew Fisher, set out to create a sophisticated interior for his clients while honoring the history of the winery in the process.

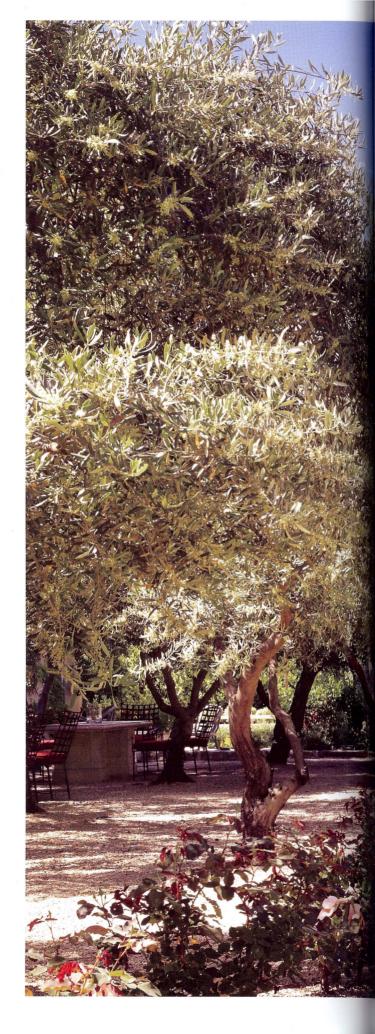
"Our vision from the start was that the elegance and importance of the structure deserved a very upgraded interior," says Weisman, who, with Fisher, devised a concept to help inspire that transformation. "We thought that, of all of Napa's cultural roots, the Italian, Spanish and Portuguese influences were the sexiest.

ARCHITECTURE Andrew Fisher and Jeffry Weisman, Fisher Weisman

INTERIOR DESIGN Andrew Fisher and Jeffry Weisman, Fisher Weisman

HOME BUILDER SBD Construction & Development

BEDROOMS 1 BATHROOMS 2 SQUARE FEET 3,600



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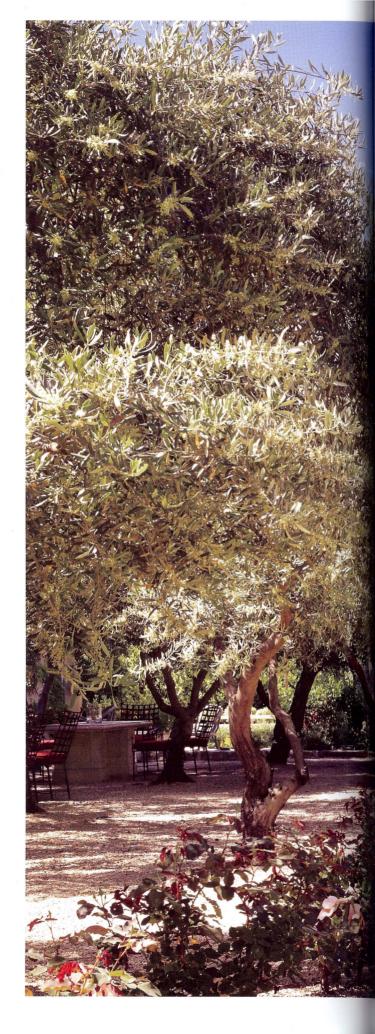
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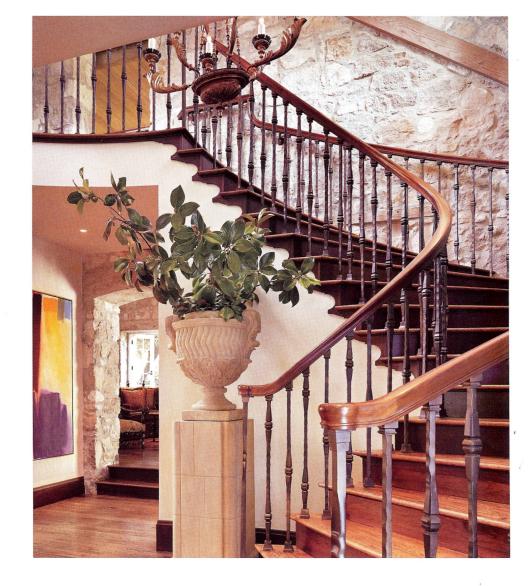
So we came up with the story that the building had been constructed by a Portuguese immigrant who wanted some of his Old World feel in his New World house." From there, the overhaul started. The designers, working with builders SBD Construction & Development in St. Helena, hollowed out the entire core of the house and established an open floor plan with public rooms on the first floor and a master suite upstairs. The lackluster materials were replaced with rough-hewn reclaimed-oak floors, Venetian plaster walls, mahogany plank doors with ebony tracery, and weathered walnut coffers and ceiling beams to disguise the exposed plumbing. The formal details create an elegant atmosphere, but the worn surfaces—teamed with the old stone walls—infuse the space with softness.

OPEN INVITATION

Napa's Mediterranean influences inspired the designers' furniture choices, as evidenced in the entry, where a late-16th-century Spanish walnut table from R.M. Barokh Antiques in Los Angeles stands beneath a 17th-century Florentine mirror found at Urban Chateau Antiquités & Décoration in San Francisco. The table lamps, made from antique Chinese vases, are from Ridgway House in St. Helena. The 19thcentury French alabaster pendant light and entry sconces are from Paul Ferrante in LA.







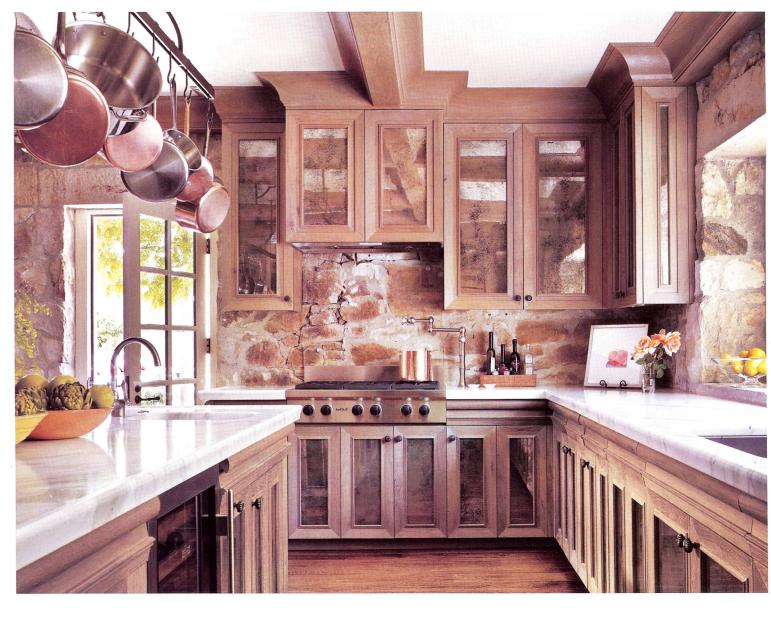
STAIR MASTER

The total interior transformation included replacing the existing big, clunky staircase with a graceful curved stair made from iron and white oak. Paul Ferrante's Phoenix chandelier, custom-made in an oval shape, lights the space. The pedestal and Latch urn are from Michael Taylor Designs.

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"Clearly the structure is very old," says Weisman. "So we wanted the interior to feel refreshed and maintained but not like a brand new house." Following that direction, the designers replaced a bulky concrete fireplace with a polished mahogany-and-antiqued-glass design in the voluminous living room. "It was part of our romantic Portuguese concept," says Weisman, who grouped two mohair-covered Ebanista sofas with a custom marble-topped coffee table and 19^{th} -century French armchair. "The sofas' high backs give you a sense of enclosure in a space that's so tall."





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French doors flank the fireplace, and Portuguese-inspired upholstered banquettes are poised in both corners. One is paired with a coffee table and chairs, and the other doubles as a dining table for intimate meals. "You have the ability to be cozy in every part of the room, and none of it feels grandiose for a small group," says Weisman.

For larger groups, the dining room features a round Randolph & Hein table surrounded by custom chairs, covered with a cotton Fortuny print. The golds and browns of the "elegant country" fabric, as Weisman describes it, perfectly complement the exposed stone wall and balance the formal lines of the furniture. A striking carved-and-gilded chandelier and freestanding candelabra, all from Paul Ferrante, illuminate the space in dramatic fashion.

MIRROR, MIRROR

Antiqued mirror panels set into custom walnut cabinetry create a statement-making kitchen. The designers eschewed hardware in favor of molded-top drawers for a seamless look. Calacatta Oro marble counters flow up to the stone walls, which are protected with a sheet of tempered clear glass above the Wolf stove. The hardware is from Nanz.



CORNER TABLE

Fisher Weisman designed a Portuguese-style banquette, accented with 19th-century Italian silk-velvet pillows from Kathleen Taylor—The Lotus Collection in San Francisco, to carve out an intimate space within the large living room. Paul Ferrante custom chairs, covered with Fortuny fabric, and a twisted-base table from Panache Designs in LA offer a cozy dining option.

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"We took the approach of putting jewelry throughout the house at different scales," says Weisman. "The hardware is custom and very jewel-like, and a lot of the chandeliers are very fine and elegant. They become sparkling elements against the soft architectural materials."

A hint of shimmer shines through in other areas of the house as well. The library, appointed with comfortable Fisher Weisman-designed pieces covered with mohairs and velvets, is set off by a small mirrored bar in the corner. And, while the jewel-like detail lends depth to the room, the designers used a heavier hand in the kitchen. "The kitchen is on the back side of the house,





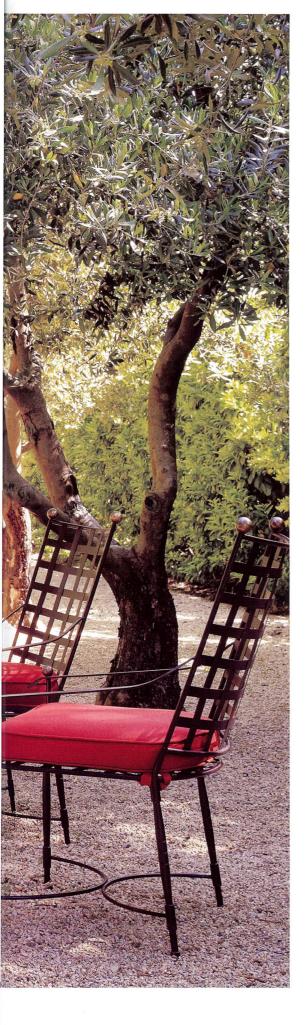


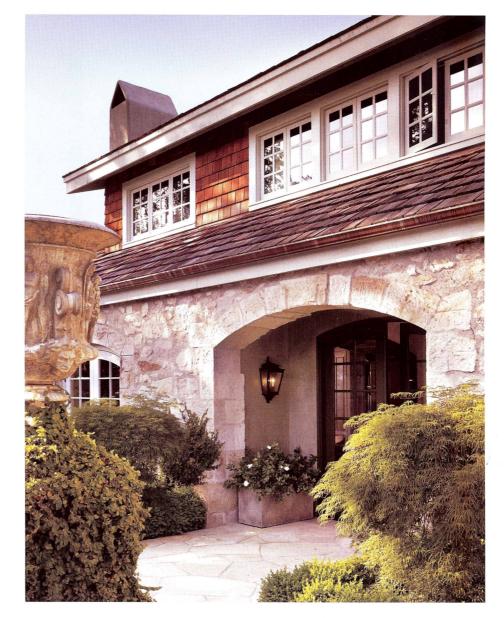


SWIM SEASON

An existing pool house was remodeled into a casual indoor/outdoor retreat. The designers furnished the living area with rattan furniture from their collection with The Wicker Works at Sloan Miyasato in San Francisco and chose a large-scale black-and-white Manuel Canovas print. Outside, Giati umbrellas shade chaise lounges by Thomas Bartlett Interiors in Napa. The red-lacquered steel coral chandelier was custom-designed by Fisher Weisman.







HOUSE PROUD

Fisher Weisman redesigned the 19th-century structure around the existing stone walls. "Napa Valley stone has an incredible warmth to it," says Weisman. "It has the most gorgeous soft tones and textures." A row of second-story windows overlooks the property's gardens.

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which gets a little less light," explains Weisman. "So we used antiqued mirror in the cabinets to make it sparkle and reflect the outside."

Through this creative attention to detail and careful selection of materials, furnishings and custom touches, the designers created a timeless interior that feels at home in the old stone winery. "It's a 19^{th} -century building crafted from the native material of the valley," says Weisman. "It has a very rooted, Old World feel, and I think everything we did on the inside was meant to enhance that and make it function spectacularly for today."