

# New England HOME

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## Seaside *Reverie*



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Working with the topography of the land, architect Colin Flavin burrowed the base of this Dover, Massachusetts, house into the hillside, keeping the front fairly solid to enhance the sense of discovery as visitors venture inside. A winglike canopy cantilevers over the entry, providing shelter from the elements. The floor above opens on grade with the backyard and is clad in mahogany slats and painted exterior-grade plywood.

CALIFORNIA

DREAMIN'

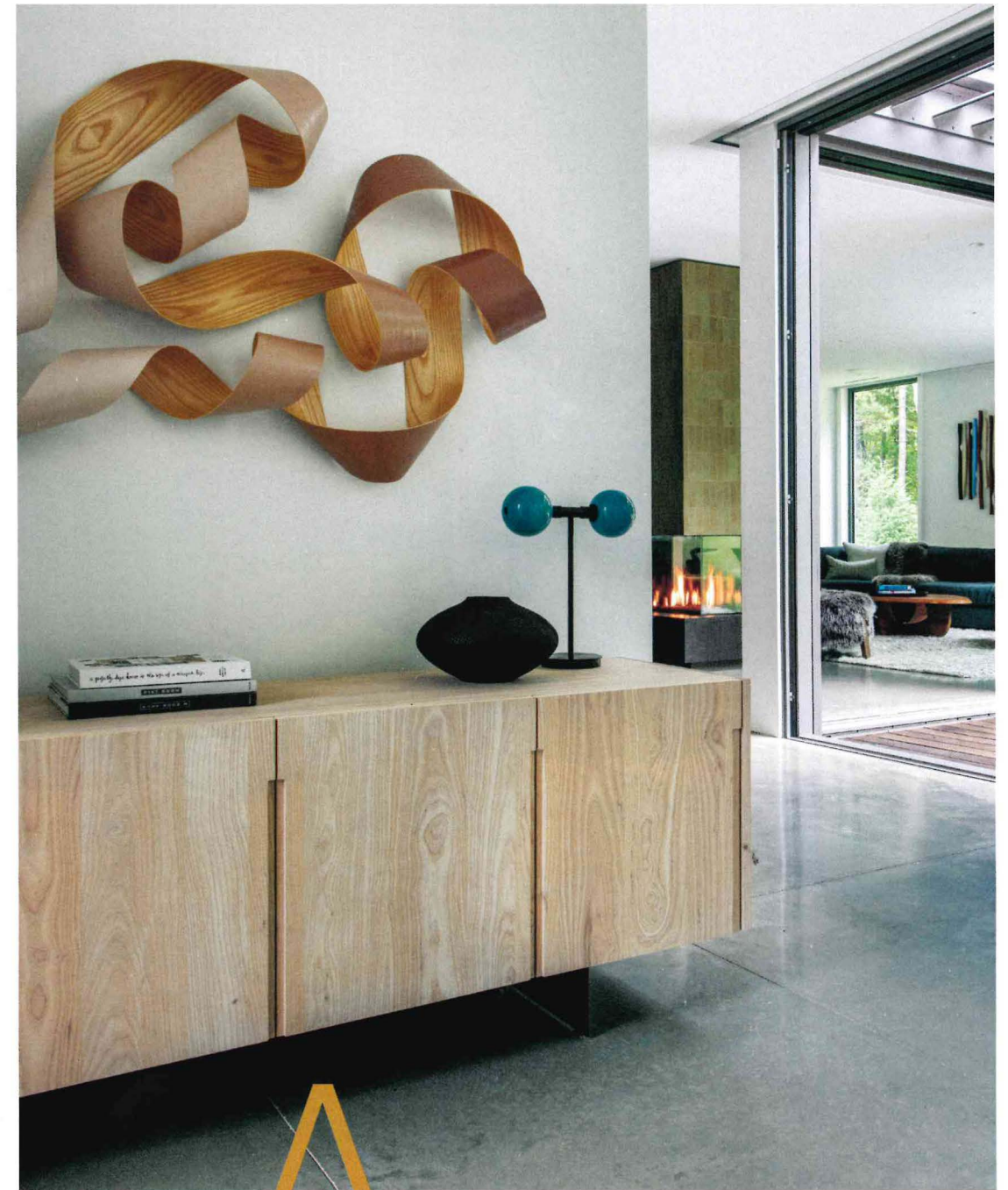
A design team and a client, all with Golden State roots,  
bring a little bit of the West back East.

Text by FRED ALBERT | Photography by NAT REA





A flight of stairs leads to the main floor where a Croft House credenza resting under a Jeremy Holmes wall sculpture sets a sophisticated scene. **FACING PAGE:** The pivoting front door is tucked in a gap between the angled foundation walls, which were crafted from board-formed concrete. Uplights concealed in the stone-filled troughs highlight the texture at night.



**A**fter a Massachusetts couple asked architect Colin Flavin to design a house for their wooded property in Dover, Flavin and the husband bonded over their California childhoods and their mutual love for the diaphanous glass-walled houses that proliferated there in the postwar years. But could that kind of indoor/outdoor approach work in frigid New England?



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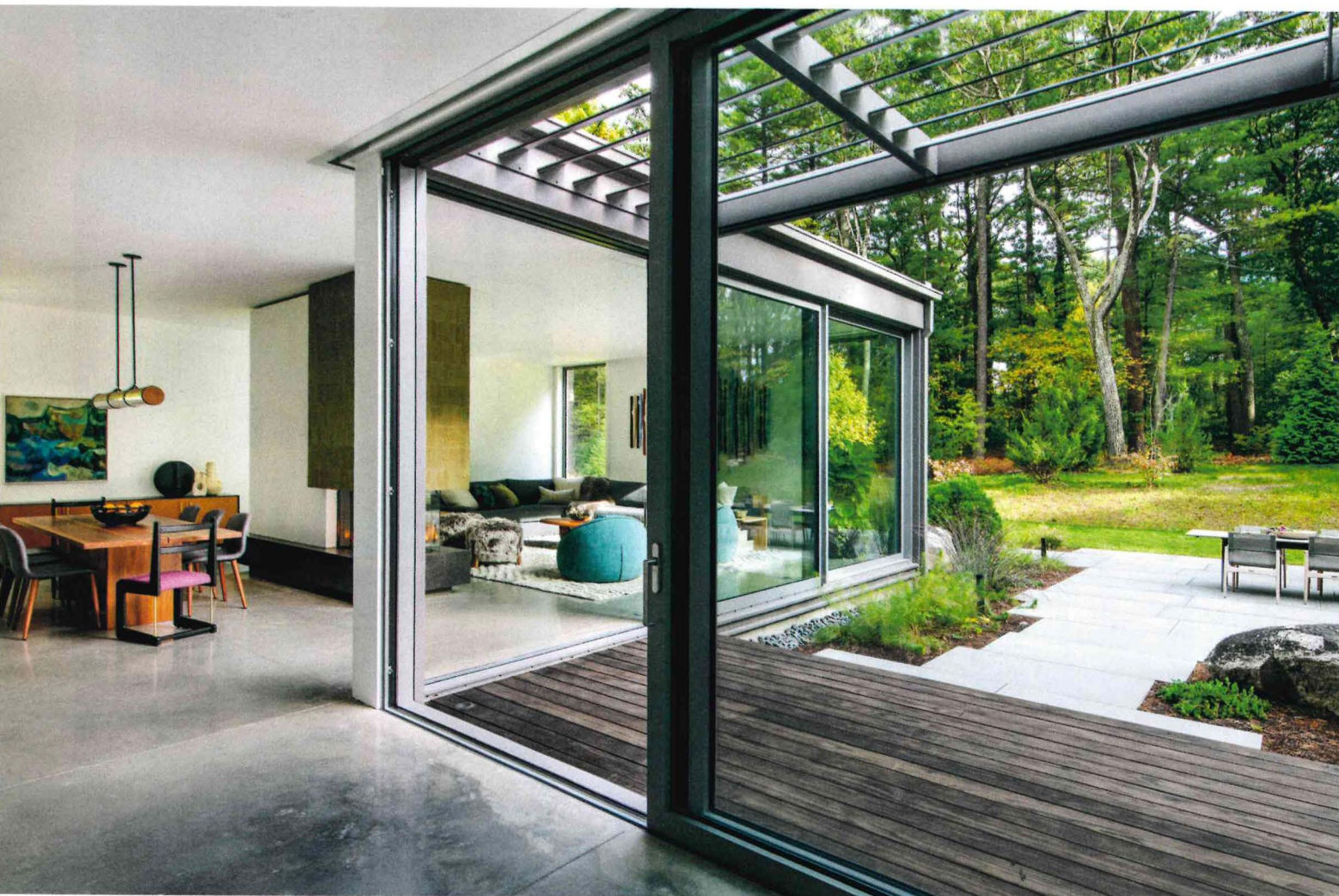
—ARCHITECT COLIN FLAVIN



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** The upper floor is oriented around an exterior courtyard that’s visible through floor-to-ceiling glass doors. Evanescent Moooi pendants illuminate the staircase, drawing visitors upstairs; the painted-steel screen behind them enhances safety without compromising transparency. “The husband loves green,” says designer Lindsay Bentis, who paired Nemo tiles in that color with Pablo pendants and a concrete sink in the powder room.



The courtyard's Kebony deck is sheltered by a brise-soleil whose angled vanes admit light in winter and block it in summer. **FACING PAGE:** Lawson-Fenning stools sidle up to a kitchen island covered in Olympian White Danby marble from Vermont and illuminated by a trio of Muuto pendants.



“We loved the juxtaposition of the wood against the concrete.”

—INTERIOR DESIGNER  
LINDSAY BENTIS

Indeed it could. The house that Flavin designed for the pair has a sunny SoCal vibe that's as exhilarating as a drive down the Pacific Coast Highway. Shaped like a U with one splayed arm, the home is oriented around a rear courtyard surrounded by floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors that provide easy access to the yard and views of nature from every

angle. “When you're inside, you feel like you're outside,” marvels the wife.

But creating that connection to the landscape was no easy feat. To maximize privacy from the busy street in front, Flavin pushed the house toward the rear of the property, recessing the ground floor into the bottom of a slope, so that the upper floor—where the public spaces and bedrooms are located—opens onto the flat terrain above. “We removed almost three thousand tons of material on the site,” recalls builder Jim DePaolo of Denali Construction Corporation.

A sinuous driveway winds through the trees, depositing visitors in front of the somewhat inscrutable front facade, where a break between two skewed foundation walls reveals a pivoting front door. This level contains a media room, gym, guest room, and garage, and is linked to the main living area above by a sun-drenched floating staircase.







**TOP TO BOTTOM:** The primary bedroom has views in two directions; there are three other bedrooms to accommodate guests or the owners' college-age sons. The lower level includes an exercise room with a view of the textured concrete retaining wall holding back the hillside. **FACING PAGE:** The Zen room on the main floor can be used for reading, work, meditation, or yoga. A pocket door closes it off from the hallway beyond.



"The light coming from above draws you upstairs," Flavin explains.

On the upper level, heated concrete floors unite the open floor plan, which is only interrupted by a freestanding fireplace wall poised between the living room and the dining/kitchen area. "Open plans can be really challenging if they don't have a separation," Flavin says. "If one is sitting in the living room, it's sort of nice not to be looking at a kitchen counter."

Not that those counters accumulate much

clutter. A generous butler's pantry absorbs so much storage, the kitchen didn't even need upper cabinets. "That way, it doesn't feel as much like a kitchen—it just feels like a beautiful room," explains Flavin. Pale white oak cabinets and snowy marble and quartz counters underscore the room's serene vibe, abetted by a range hood shrouded in an austere white cube.

Blonde oak ceilings add a warming touch to some of the rooms, as does the decor, overseen by Lindsay Bentis of Thread Interiors, who's also





"We wanted the upper level to be at grade, so the courtyard would be part of daily life," says Flavin, who splayed one wing to welcome in the surroundings and painted the entire rear gray to give the house a hushed presence in the landscape. Each element—from the specimen trees to the grill—was carefully selected, prompting the owners to refer to this as their "curated courtyard."

a California native. "They wanted it to be this very modern structure, but the wife didn't want it to feel cold," Bentis says. "So we layered in textures, colors, materials, and shapes to create a warmer vibe."

Handmade tiles wrap the fireplace and line the kitchen's back wall, adding a variegated, tactile

quality to the surfaces—an approach that's echoed in the tufted ribbons coursing through the living room carpet. The mammoth sectional on top cradles a surfboard-shaped coffee table crafted from walnut. "We loved the juxtaposition of the wood against the concrete," Bentis says.

One advantage that California can't claim is the change of seasons. As winter gives way to spring, summer, and fall, the owners enjoy an ever-changing panorama of color and light through the transparent walls. "It's mesmerizing," says the wife.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For details, see Resources.

**ARCHITECTURE:** Flavin Architects  
**INTERIOR DESIGN:** Thread Interiors  
**BUILDER:** Denali Construction  
**LANDSCAPE DESIGN:** Rehl Gardens



A photograph of a modern hillside house at dusk. The house features a cantilevered canopy over the entrance, supported by concrete walls. The exterior is clad in dark, vertical wooden slats. The interior is lit up, showing a staircase and a living area. The house is surrounded by trees and a paved driveway. The sky is dark with some clouds.

IN THE  
DETAILS

# The Good Life

ON THE MARKET • DESIGN DISPATCHES • THE SCENE

*California  
Dreamin',  
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Concrete walls are both foundation and decoration in this hillside house in Dover, Massachusetts, so Helene Woodvine of **Siegel Structural Engineers** had to take extra care planning them. "Since the walls are going to be exposed, you're looking to minimize cracking," she says. That meant reinforcing them with extra rebar and more than doubling the size of the footings that brace the retaining walls. Anchors were embedded in the concrete flanking the entry (seen here) to hold up a cantilevered canopy. "This way, you don't see the support," notes Woodvine, who also had to accommodate the weight of any snow that might accumulate on the canopy in winter. —Fred Albert