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## ***ARTIST REMODEL***

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LAVENSON DESIGN

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**B**uilt in 1948, this hillside home in Piedmont steps down and away from the street, appearing as a single story at street level. The top floor, which defines the architectural character, was originally a traditional ranch style, with hipped shingle roofs, horizontal wood siding, and eight-foot high ceilings in most rooms. In 2001, the current owner initiated a multi phase evolution of the house that culminated with a complete remodel of the 1800 square foot top floor in 2013–14.

All sloped roofs and attics were eliminated, replaced by a series of stacked and overlapping modern flat roofs. Walls and new windows were extended upward to gain ceiling height and to allow clerestory windows that send natural light deep into the interior. By eliminating the attic, the architect was able to make the house taller inside and slightly shorter outside, which helped earn design review cooperation from neighbors. A small addition was added, to square up an awkward corner of the living room and to extend the house in the direction of the San Francisco Bay views. However, a narrow deck was simultaneously removed there, again trading off to reduce the exterior of the house while increasing the interior space. Wood windows and exterior doors were replaced with larger commercial grade aluminum versions and the wood siding was replaced with stucco. At the same time, the exterior envelope was brought up to current energy standards and photovoltaic array was added to the roof. Thick eaves with natural cedar soffits accentuate the horizontality and geometric massing of the new rooflines. Parapet walls at the street front screen the solar panels from public view.

Previously, the owner had remodeled the entry garden to create a hardscape courtyard off the street, and he added ➔

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The design of this project was an interesting collaboration between the owner, architect, and builder.

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The modernist forms of the house dovetail with the geometry of a private entry courtyard designed by the owner, with landscape architect David Thorne.

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The architect removed several interior walls and raised the ceilings dramatically, to create large bright living spaces in the previously low, dark ranch house.

Windows were deleted in favor of a large skylight above the shower, to create a private and serene bathing area off the master bedroom.

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The contractor, Building Lab, suggested the cedar light shelf and soffit as a way to tie two different ceiling heights together.

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a multi story view deck at the rear of the home. For the current remodel, the architect dovetailed the house into these outdoor spaces. He extended a thick wall from inside, past the front door, where it becomes a brightly colored slab in the courtyard which announced the front entry—drawing visitors into the house and through it, to the view deck at the rear, where he extended the roof and ceiling planes over the deck to carry the eye outward.

Interior rooms were merged and circulation was realigned on the top floor to create a single level that accommodated most daily activities for the empty nester owners. Now, the lower floor bedrooms are primarily for guests and a home office for the husband. The remodeled area also functions as a gallery and studio for the wife, who is an artist. Her canvasses hang on the broad white walls, lending delight and bold beauty to the spaces. In the kitchen, an orange glass section of cabinets chosen by the owners pops into view, almost as if it were one of the works of

art—which in a way, it is.

The design of this project was an interesting collaboration between the owner, architect, and builder. The owner, who already had experience redesigning and remodeling homes, initially presented the architect with a foamcore board model of the house he wanted, rather than just a few magazine clippings and a wish list. The architect, whom he had worked with before, developed this into a comprehensive design for the house, which transformed the home's identity and energized the existing outdoor spaces. Then, he navigated through a rigorous design review process to garner unanimous planning commission approval on the first round—an unusual outcome for projects that radically change an existing house in an established neighborhood. The project was then handed off to a design-build general contractor who handled the construction detailing and added some complementary design twists of his own, while carrying the project to a successful completion. 