



Mid-Century Made Modern

JKA Design deftly coaxes a 1950s Cliff May-designed house into the 21st century

by
ANH-MINH LE

photography by
JOSE MANUEL ALORDA

Interior designer John K. Anderson's appreciation for mid-century dwellings can be traced to his childhood in the Dallas area. While he grew up in a traditional Georgian-style abode, his grandparents lived close by in "a beautiful 1956 house in the country designed by O'Neil Ford," he recalls. "It was a modern house on the prairie, with cattle and donkeys and horses. And it made such an impression on me. My love of that architecture started back then."

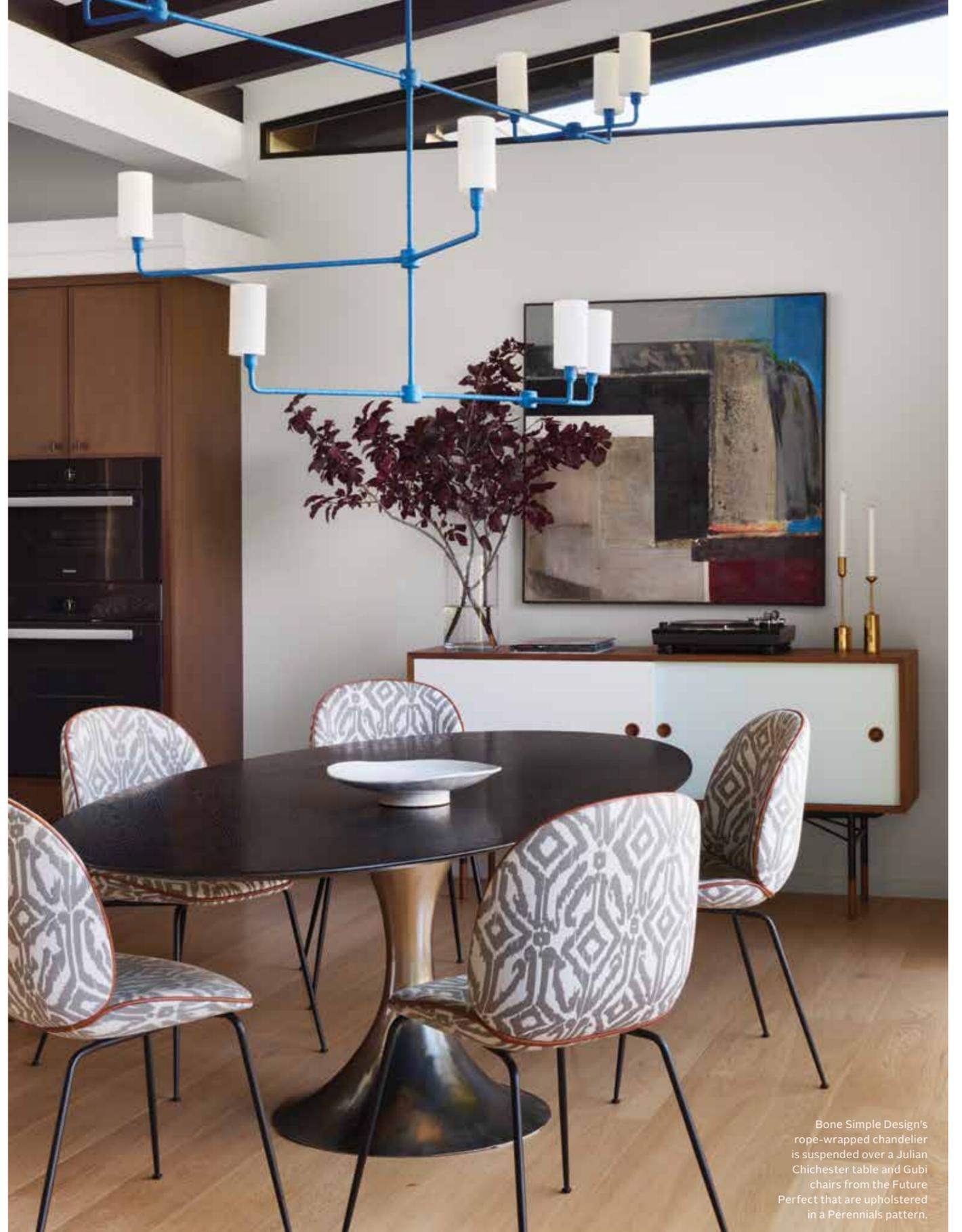
Years later, now with an interior design practice in San Francisco, Anderson had the opportunity to reimagine a Lafayette, California, home by a Ford contemporary: Cliff May, the architect credited with creating the California ranch house that gained popularity in the mid-20th century.

Anderson's clients, a couple with three young children, purchased the 1954 property after the original owner passed away. Although there were concepts worth preserving—like the triangular window just below the ceiling in the family room that "brings in light and nature, but at that higher point where you're seeing trees and sky, and also getting privacy," observes Anderson—renovations were necessary to better suit

Flexform's Groundpiece sofa faces a custom media unit in the family room, which also includes Hammers and Heels' hexagonal tables, a vintage Svend Skipper chair and a leather-and-walnut chair by Bernhardt.



CLOCKWISE: The kitchen's custom cabinetry is adorned with bronze hardware from Schoolhouse Electric. The Menara Gray countertops and zellige backsplash tiles are from Exquisite Surfaces; the backyard sits amongst a forest of tall trees; the guest bathroom features a 1960s credenza that JKA Design converted into a vanity and topped with Belvedere quartzite from IRG that hangs on a wall adorned in Cole & Son's Melville wallpaper.



Bone Simple Design's rope-wrapped chandelier is suspended over a Julian Chichester table and Gubi chairs from the Future Perfect that are upholstered in a Perennials pattern.

its incoming occupants. The goal was to transform the house into “the best version of what it wanted to be,” says Anderson of the collaborative effort with architect John Voegel, builder North Coast Remodeling and Construction, landscape designer Lutsko Associates and project manager Spectre8.

For starters, the entire roof was raised two feet throughout, yielding a “more lofty feel,” says Anderson. The square footage increased from 2,700 to 3,500, thanks in part to the conversion of a garage into an office/guest quarters. A new two-car garage was built on an area that previously contained a carport. A large glass-enclosed porch was supplanted by an expanded family room, whose wall of windows frames the backyard.

A neutral palette was proposed—a tactic often employed by Anderson’s firm, JKA Design. “We generally wanted this neutral environment,” he explains. “Then we folded in color with some of the furnishings, the pillows and the art. Shades of blue found their way throughout the house. It’s a favorite color of the homeowners and of JKA.”

European white oak floors also offer a visual throughline. According to Anderson, “mahogany that we bleached and then stained to take the red out of it” makes frequent appearances, too; for example, in the kitchen



A Soane chair upholstered in green leather and John Nicolini's 13 *Interchange*, from Lost Art Salon, pop in the husband's cedar-clad office.



CLOCKWISE: Cole & Son's Woods & Stars lines a playroom wall behind Eyvind Earle's *Sleeping Beauty Countryside*; in the master bedroom Porter Teleo's Floral Graffiti wallpaper frames the master bathroom; Andrew Woodside Carter fabricated the custom headboard with built-in nightstands that sit below a Michael Chamberlain painting from STUDIO Gallery.

as well as the bedroom's custom-designed headboard and storage. The walls are painted in Benjamin Moore's Calm and the ceiling beams in Farrow & Ball's Mahogany.

For the furnishings, mid-century elements were on the wish list, but Anderson was careful "not to be heavy-handed with that," he says. The family room is anchored by a putty-hued, 11-foot-long Flexform sofa that faces a custom-made media unit whose tapered legs are a nod to mid-century design. Other leather covers the shelves and door fronts for an understated elegance. A vintage Danish chair by Svend Skipper and a leather-and-walnut armchair by Bernhardt round out the seating in the room.

In the adjacent dining area—over a Julian Chichester pedestal table surrounded by Gubi's Beetle chairs that have "mid-century lines," says Anderson—a three-tiered, rope-wrapped chandelier in cobalt injects texture and bold color. The blue is picked up in a nearby painting, Barbara Lewis' *Harrison Building—Flowering Cliffs*, acquired from Lost Art Salon and hanging above a Finn Juhl credenza from DWR.

An open kitchen completes the great room; here, Anderson combined Menara Gray countertops and zellige tiles, both from Exquisite Surfaces. "It's beautifully simple and has a handmade quality that makes it really timeless," he says of the handmade Moroccan creations. The kitchen also benefited from new skylights that beckon natural light.

Reflecting on the three-year project, Anderson notes that the great room is a standout, enhanced by those windows that span an entire wall. Says the designer: "We took that classic, indoor/outdoor California living quality—which was so in the spirit of what Cliff May was about—to the next level."



The sitting room holds vintage pieces—a Jens Risom sofa, a rug from Tony Kitz Gallery and a pair of lounge chairs reupholstered in blood orange mohair from Kneedler Fauchère—as well as a table from Lawson-Fenning and a glazed porcelain wall sculpture by Syra Gomez.

