

On the **HORIZON**
A HILLTOP AERIE *IN* BERKELEY
CAPTURES DRAMATIC VIEWS
AND CASTS AN EYE *TO THE* FUTURE.

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Architect Cecily Young—with help from her architect husband John Ruble—spearheaded a down-to-the-bones renovation of a home set into steep terrain in Berkeley, California. Cecily added a rental

apartment below the main level, with the idea that it could be home to a live-in caretaker as she and John get older. All three floors command a panoramic view of San Francisco Bay.



Cecily Young and John Ruble were thinking about a second home. The architect couple were keen to collaborate again, having designed their sprawling, palm-tree-shaded house near Culver City, California, in the early aughts. This time they wanted to build a more compact, low-maintenance getaway where they might eventually retire. Cecily, 62, and John, 72, started by scouting locations close to home. Dedicated city folk, they weren't seeking to go off the grid, and they thought they'd found the perfect balance of town and country with a plot they bought a couple of hours away in Ojai. But developing the untouched parcel of mountaintop proved to be cost-prohibitive. In 2012, they visited Berkeley to tour Cecily's alma mater with their son. "When I looked up toward the hills, I saw all these windows glowing," recalls Cecily. "I realized they must be reflecting the sun as it set over the San Francisco Bay. Well, eureka!" Four months later, a midcentury,

shed-roofed house perched on the highest street in the North Berkeley Hills hit the market. Modest in scale, with its original galley kitchen and succession of small rooms, the house was ripe for a complete remodel. Cecily led the process with support from John and his office (he is a partner at Moore Ruble Yudell Architects and Planners), which worked on the construction drawings. What required no tinkering was the location. Sitting at an elevation of 1,275 feet, the property is flanked by the 2,000 pristine acres of Tilden Regional Park on one side and breathtaking views of the bay, Golden Gate Bridge, and Mount Tamalpais on the other. The house nestles below street level beneath a canopy of Monterey pines. No static postcard vista, the scene outside is always in flux, shifting on a dime from blue skies and bright sunlight to mists that whoosh in to white out the windows. The couple also appreciated the house's soaring ceiling and general layout, with >

"WE WANTED THE INTERIOR TO FEEL QUIET, SO THAT THE PEOPLE—AND MAYBE SOME OBJECTS—ARE THE COLORFUL THINGS IN IT."
CECILY YOUNG, ARCHITECT AND RESIDENT



Cecily kept the home's slanted roof but opened the living space dramatically. The dining area—with an original Eero Saarinen table—flows into the living area, where a 1960s coffee table with a mosaic by Cecily's grandmother is joined by a Costura sofa from Design Within Reach. In the kitchen (opposite), the cabinets are by Henrybuilt, the countertop is by Caesarstone, and the range hood is from Futuro.

“SOME DAYS THE VIEW IS INSANELY VIVID, AND OTHER DAYS IT’S VERY MUTED. BUT IT’S ALWAYS CHANGING, EVEN WITHIN MINUTES.” CECILY YOUNG



“All of the tones are gray, green, or muted,” says Cecily. “We were thinking of a cloudy, calm, ethereal aesthetic.” The couple did not include a deck off the living area because they didn’t want to disturb the view with a railing.

Guests can gaze across the bay from PK22 rattan chairs by Poul Kjaerholm or sit by a fireplace from Ortol. The painting hanging above is by Harry Cohen. The Russian oak hardwood is from Tulip Floors.

A painting by Tina Beebe hangs in the master bedroom (below). The entry courtyard (opposite) opens to the living and dining areas (right). The property has a rainwater harvesting system with underground

cisterns that supply the toilets and washing machine, as well as a recirculating hot water system. Cecily and John estimate that they will save roughly 30,000 gallons of water each year.



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Summit House

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ARCHITECT

Cecily Young
with Moore Ruble Yudell

LOCATION

Berkeley, California

A Master Bedroom

B Master Bathroom

C Elevator

D Dressing Area

E Garage

F Bedroom

G Bathroom

H Powder Room

I Living/Dining Area

J Entrance

K Patio

L Balcony

M Kitchen

N Family Room

O Kitchenette

P Living Room

Q Laundry

R Mechanical Room

a small guestroom on the main floor and a loft master suite. Cecily added 1,020 square feet to the existing 1,750 by pushing out sparingly in a few directions, in part to accommodate an elevator from a new carport to the main floor below. A one-bedroom tenant apartment was added downhill, beneath the main level, with the intention of housing a live-in caregiver should the need ever arise.

With the judicious removal of some walls, and the swapping out of wood beams for slim steel supports, the cramped kitchen was replaced by an open-plan kitchen and living/dining area. Seeking to take advantage of usable outdoor space, Cecily pushed back the sloping hill that came within five feet of the front door and carved out a courtyard patio that flows into the house when the sliding glass doors are open. Three balconies—one off the kitchen, another outside the guestroom, and one running the full length of the downstairs unit—offer more alfresco options, but there is no massive deck alongside the living room. “We didn’t want a bunch of rails in our sightline destroying the delicious

feeling of floating in air,” says Cecily.

With so much atmospheric drama right outside the picture windows, Cecily and John wanted the interior to feel quiet, unified, and calm, and turned to Henrybuilt—the Seattle-based company originally known for its crafted, customizable kitchen systems—for all the casework. The couple craved a “cool, cloudy, ethereal” hue for the oak cabinetry but couldn’t find the melding of gray, green, and blue they envisioned among the available finishes. So Chris Barriatua, Henrybuilt’s executive director, turned to Allen Breaux, a colleague with a fine arts background, to concoct a custom color. “And they nailed it,” says Cecily of the serene shade informally dubbed “Ruble Oak.”

Their new home offers a toehold in both the urban and bucolic worlds. “No, I’ve never harbored fantasies of living in the country,” says Cecily. “But there is something magical about being right on the edge. With Tilden Park across the street, we can hop on a trail outside our front door, hike for hours—and be back in time for a shower and dinner at a great restaurant.” ■

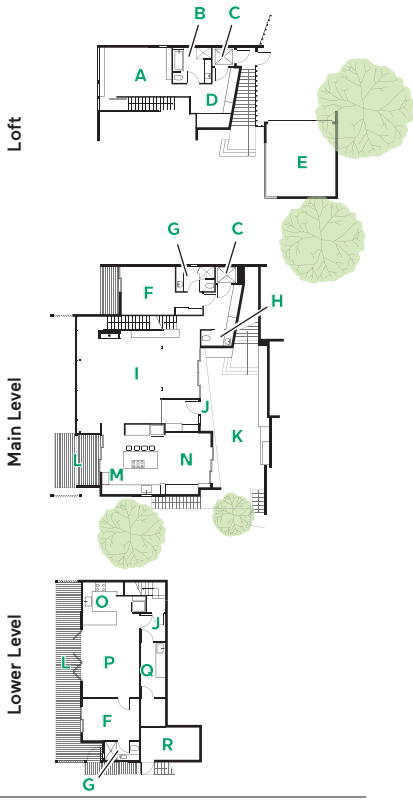


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