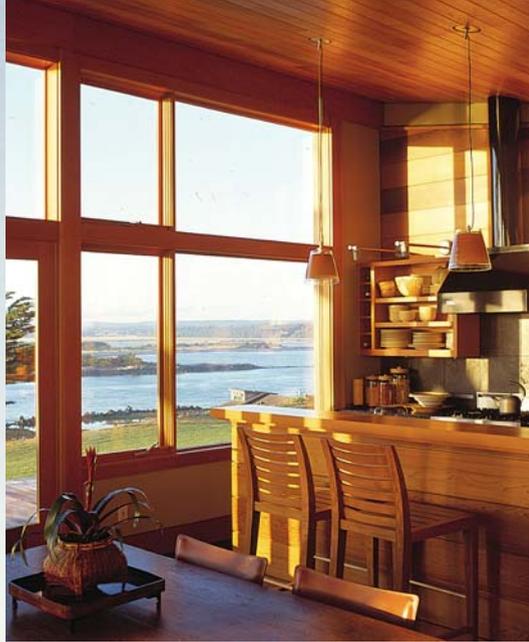


A
gathering
place

for
fam

A simple palette of **natural materials**
complements a **comfortable** home



BY KAREN TANAKA

ily

in a dramatic setting

Years ago, Jean Rittenour's mother bought a piece of property in Oregon on Bandon Bluff, where the Coquille River meets the Pacific Ocean. It sits across from the lighthouse, looking up to the dunes. "Mom had always hoped to build a beach house here," says Jean, "a place for the whole family." When she inherited the land, Jean and her husband, Ralph, dreamed of a house that captured the feeling of standing in nature on the bluff. Johnston Architects of Seattle helped the Rittenours achieve this dream through a careful and thoughtful design and a spare but warm design palette. They collaborated to produce a house with dramatic charm and personality—the perfect place for family gatherings.

HUNKERED AGAINST THE WIND. A family compound on the Oregon coast is built of weather-resistant materials and designed to take in the views. At right, the Rittenour clan hangs out during construction.





Working with a color palette

A well-thought-out color palette gives a coherent look to fabrics with widely differing textures and patterns.

The spare color palette in the house is the perfect accent to the natural materials used to build it. The Rittenours asked their daughter, Kari, who has her own freelance design business, to help them achieve an interior that they were comfortable with and that suited the modern style of the house. Kari brought her experience to bear on the all-important interior details: finishes, paint, tile, fixtures, furniture, and the soft goods—towels, bedding, window seats. Even the dishes are color coordinated. “Architects Ray and Mary Johnston brought me in at the beginning of the project,” says Kari. “We had a great working relationship.”

Ray Johnston concurs: “Kari was an integral part of the way the house looks; she proposed colors that would help balance each room.”

For the color palette Kari simply looked through the windows to the dramatic setting and found, she says, “the khaki-color grasses, stormy gray-blue skies, and deep-green cypress trees.” The natural colors complemented the cedar inside as well as the weathered wood visible through

all the windows. “I worked out color schemes,” she says, “and got fabrics and textures to represent each color in the palette.”

“It was very important for Mary and Ray and Dad and Jean to have warmth—to balance the somewhat austere natural hues—so orange was added to the palette.” She emphatically recommends looking at colors in every type of light—daytime, nighttime, outside; a blue you see under fluorescent shop lights may look entirely different in front of a big, west-facing window.

While some of her choices were top of the line, like the Cassina chairs and the Larsen fabric for the sofa, she also found Ikea to be a good source.

She advises, “Be selective and wait for the right thing, but don’t be afraid to have fun. Have a clear understanding of what you’re looking for and stick to your plan.”

Additional elements chosen to add warmth were the lighting sconces and pendants in the



main living area, and the open shelving in the living room and kitchen. Dark colors for the concrete floors throughout and the black limestone counters used in the kitchen unify and ground the interior design. Everyone collaborated on the details. Jean Rittenour found the pebbled tile floor for the guest shower in Portland. A final tip from Jean: “Whenever you go to look for furnishings, take all your color swatches with you.”





“Be selective and wait for the right thing,
but don’t be afraid to have fun.” — Kari Rittenour, designer



When installed, glass tiles show subtle variations in the depth and sheen of color.

In addition to the feeling of being out in the environment, the Rittenours wanted a casual house with clean, simple lines, made of no-nonsense, easy-to-maintain, durable materials. Lastly, they wanted it to blend in with its surroundings.

IMPORTANT ROOMS LOOK TO THE VIEW

“As the design evolved, we worked closely with Jean and Ralph to develop a simple interior that would be easy to live in,” says architect Ray Johnston.

The proportion of the rooms has a lot to do with how comfortable a house feels. “A room that’s twice as long and taller than it is wide will feel awkward,” says Ray. “It’ll feel like a big hallway—one you should walk

LONG VIEWS ACROSS THE HOUSE AND TO THE SEA. *The central room of the house contains the kitchen as well as the dining and living areas. Throughout the house, dark concrete floors are finished with lamp-black concrete stain and wax.*

Places



The house is designed so that all the major rooms—kitchen, living and dining room, bedrooms, even the loft space over the garage—have commanding views of the sea-coast. The walls of windows also provide anyone working in the kitchen a view across the house, into the courtyard, and to the property beyond. Bathrooms and utility areas are situated in the back of the house, away from the vistas.

The decks and outdoor areas are in constant use by family members. Patios, walkways, and a koi pond delight the grandchildren who visit the house. And a rooftop crow's nest is perfect for sunbathing.

WHERE TO GO WHEN THERE'S OVERFLOW. The windows of the second floor studio apartment, built over the garage, look over the roof of the main house for a view of their own. Long built-in couches double as bunk space for visiting family members.

through rather than sit in." The Johnstons designed the main living area—a combination of kitchen, living room, and dining area—to be a comfortable shape where the height, width, and length of the space are in the right proportions.

The master bedroom and guest room, both with attendant baths, are in opposite ends of the house, separated by the main living area. This separation addresses the privacy needs in a house with an open design. To take advantage of its dramatic setting, the main living areas and bedrooms are sited so they have views of the river and the ocean. Bathrooms and dressing areas face the back of the property.

And above the garage is a spacious studio apartment, known as the loft. "The apartment was intentionally outfitted for kids, so whoever is here with their children gets that place. That frees up the main area for adults," says daughter Kari.

RESISTANT EXTERIOR FOR A HARSH ENVIRONMENT

The Johnstons chose a shed-roof design for the house because it allows for large windows facing the view while keeping the rear of the house low to the ground. The metal roofing is as crisp and simple as it is durable and long-lasting. Deep overhangs protect the house from winter's wind and rain.

To augment the experience of being in nature, an outdoor fireplace, an outdoor shower, and a crow's nest platform above the main house were included in the plan. Since the coldest wind comes from the



THE WINDOW IS A FOGGY ILLUSION. The master bathroom window is behind the sinks, with twin mirrors above. Sandblasted glass provides privacy, lets light in, and tricks the eye by mimicking the coastal fog.



CANTED WINDOW ADDS DRAMA. Seen from indoors or out (photo, p. 50), the sloped glass breaks up the otherwise vertical walls of the house and opens up an expanded view of the sky.

for family, indoors and out



Warming up to concrete

Sensuous and inviting aren't words that usually come to mind when you think of concrete. But in the Bandon Bluff house this usually stark, hard-edged material was used inventively to complement other warm surfaces in the building.

Warm floors from a cold material

All the floors in the house are concrete. Radiant heating travels in hot-water tubing under the surface of the slabs. "To help prevent cracking, we cut deep expansion joints in the floor," explains Alison Walker Brems, project manager at Johnston Architects. The joints, cut in a large, square grid, also serve a decorative purpose by breaking up the flat surface and giving it the look of giant tiles. The inviting dark patina of the floor was achieved by coloring it with a lamp-black concrete stain, then applying wax. Although the Rittenour house has dark floors, it's possible to use brighter hues. "You can get wild colors with concrete. You can put a color on top of the dried concrete, as we did here, or you can have the color added when the floor is poured," adds Brems.



Concrete floor

Concrete in the kitchen

Casting concrete into sinks (even countertops) is a new use for an old material. The kitchen sink in the Rittenours' house was made by casting concrete in a mold on a brass rim, which protects the sometimes brittle material from chipping. Ochre pigment was added to warm up the gray color of the concrete. The 120-pound sink was then sealed and waxed for a trouble-free life.



Kitchen sink

Fireplaces with an unusual texture

The indoor and outdoor back-to-back fireplaces are also made of poured concrete. Unlike the smooth-finished sink and floors, the fireplaces were formed with rough-sawn planks. The result is that when the concrete dried and the boards were removed, the grain of the wood was permanently cast into the surface of the fireplaces—a modern look with a touch of rusticity.



Board concrete



COOKING IS A PLEASURE in the compact, efficient kitchen with easy-to-clean surfaces and a huge sink. A window seat looks out on the courtyard and across to the family apartment above the garage. Originally designed to illuminate billboards, the over-counter task lighting is a stark contrast to the glass shades of the pendant fixtures that shine warmly on the island.



north, an enclosed courtyard and an east-facing entry make the approach to the house sheltered and inviting. Rose-color granite pavers in the courtyard absorb the heat from the sun and are a warming detail. Even in summer, the ocean is cold, and the pavers give off welcome heat.

With cedar and concrete on the exterior, the building can stand up to battering by the coastal weather yet be relatively low maintenance. "Time and the salt air will turn the cedar exterior of the house coastal gray," says Alison Walker Brems, project manager with Johnston Architects.

In considering all the challenges to the design and planning of a house like this, Mary and Ray Johnston name the forces of nature as the most daunting. "Winds

are so severe that even small openings, such as a pathway, can be an avenue for high winds, which are hard on buildings and plants, not to mention people," says Ray. "The coastal environment is a tough one," says Mary. "All the fasteners have to be stainless steel, and the finish has to go on under perfect conditions." After putting a finish coat on the exterior, "a wind kicked up and a hatch of gnats ruined the finish on one wall. We had to sand and refinish it."

LIVING IN BANDON BLUFF

The Rittenours have five children, seven grandchildren, and six dogs. "It's a great house for big gatherings," says



ANCIENT CYPRESS TREES SHELTER THE HOUSE AND PROVIDE SHADE. Great care was taken when the decks were built around the trees, which, aside from their obvious beauty, provide some shade for the deck and protect the house from the wind. The stairs at right lead to a crow's nest.



NO-MAINTENANCE OUTDOOR AREAS. A patio made of granite pavers flanks a wavy redwood walkway, underneath which flows a recirculating stream that connects to a waterfall and a small pond. The beds are filled with easy-care native plants.



A FAVORITE PLACE. A fountain flows from a small pool to form a miniature waterfall. Grandson Cecil plays with granite spheres and rectangles to make the water cascade in different ways.

Kari. "There are all these different places to go, and kids are running around, climbing in the trees."

The kitchen and living area is the indoor hub for family gatherings. For Jean, who loves to cook, the open kitchen, with its strategically placed window, means "whoever's in the kitchen can see whatever's going on. The grandchildren can be in the loft or playing in the fishpond, and I can see them."

On temperate evenings, the family barbecues hamburgers and fish on the deck and enjoys the sunset. "We usually go to the outdoor fireplace, and we sit wrapped up in blankets," says Kari. "On the Fourth

of July we sat on the bluff and watched the city of Bandon's fireworks display across the river. New traditions are starting in the house."

An outdoor shower is terrific for washing off after the beach and keeping sand out of the house. Even the dogs get a quick rinse. "It's great to take a shower outside and look at the ocean," says Ralph.

"When we have guests, we sit out with coffee on the morning deck that faces east. It has such a nice view," Kari comments.

Kari was married at the house last year. For her wedding, the crow's nest was set up with a table and chairs. "People would go up there and look at the view." Ordinarily "it's a great place to sunbathe and get away from the wind—it has Plexiglas inserts."

One of Ralph's favorite places to sit is the Eames chair in the living room: "I like the chair in the living room by the fireplace because I can swivel around and see the boats and the lighthouse and see everything that's going on in the room."

Jean sums up the whole experience of being in the house by

saying, "We come back so our children will also learn to love where my roots were. When I wake up in the morning, all of a sudden I hear a foghorn and I think, Oh, I'm in Bandon! The view of the ocean and river—it's everything in my whole life linked together. And it works very well for our family." **H**

Karen Tanaka is senior editor.