

With sliding glass floor-to-ceiling doors, indoor/outdoor living has been achieved throughout this now-modern home, with the living room shown here leading to a backyard where Paola Lenti outdoor furniture pops beside a new pool and firepit designed by Maydan Architects.



ART & GEOMETRY

A Peninsula house transforms into a modern masterpiece.

BY JENNIFER MASSONI PARDINI

When architect **Mary Maydan** started designing modern homes in the early 2000s, she felt out on an aesthetic limb, at least in Palo Alto. “In the beginning, everyone told me no one wants modern,” she reflects from her decidedly modern home, the second she has designed for her family of six in the town where she also runs her architecture and interior design firm, Maydan Architects. Looking at the Crate & Barrel at nearby Stanford Shopping Center — a very modern **Jacques Verilinden**-designed building — she asked around, to get a sense of whether locals liked it. With the response usually affirmative, she wondered: “So, why not a house?”

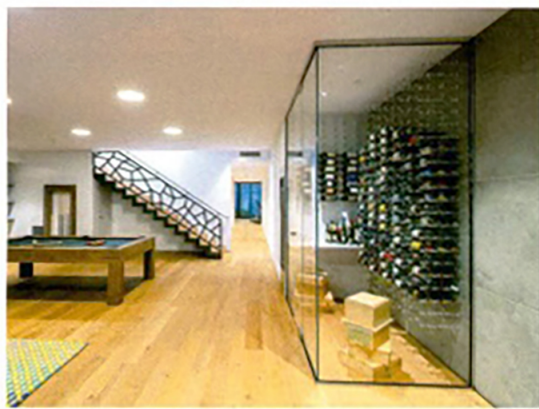
Maydan forged through the naysayers and designed a modern house of her own, selling it in 2018 at a premium as construction was wrapping on a new modern home a few minutes away in north Palo Alto. “A lot of young people made money, and they were used to Google or Facebook or the more modern offices,” she says. “They fell in love with modern, too.”

In kind, when a tech executive and his wife, an artist, attended an event at Maydan’s first house and asked who designed it, they invited her to look at their Los Altos home, built in 2000. “It was really a very new house, beautifully done, but traditional,” says Maydan, who typically takes on new construction architecture and interior design projects, but also works on extensive home remodels.

As the project got underway, the clients decided



Above: The blackened zinc entry door opens effortlessly to a 16-foot plaster wall by Alon Cohen of Coral Colours. Left: In the new lower level, custom elements — such as the steel-rail staircase and wine cellar, with 250 chrome bottle holders — were designed by Maydan Architects.



to add square footage, which meant incorporating a 3,000-square-foot basement with structural engineer Saabco Consulting and general contractor Campi Construction, to bring the total to over 7,000. “It really changes the way they live,” Maydan says of the additional space for the couple and their three young adult children. The lower level includes a recreation room, media room, 250-bottle wine cellar and home office.

When it came time to integrate the couple’s museum-quality art, with a few pieces the husband was attached to in large ornate frames, another transformation was called for. Maydan suggested the wife lean into her painting hobby and create a focal point for the open living room. A photo captured during a family trip to New Zealand inspired the

11-foot-long “Soft Misty Lights,” a vivid yet ethereal landscape with rolling fog, not unlike the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains that border Los Altos. Today, she paints from a ground-floor artist’s studio with a floor-to-ceiling sliding glass wall for access to the backyard, where a new pool and firepit with concrete bench were added.

If the studio is the wife’s favorite space in the home, which now has four bedrooms and an additional guest house, the basement-level media room is the sentimental escape for the husband, whose grandfather owned multiple movie theaters in Israel, where he grew up. “One of them had a ceiling that

could be retracted, and then you would get the experience of the sky at night,” Maydan says. To bring this childhood experience to life, a paneled ceiling fixture by Impact Lighting creates the illusion of a starlit sky, providing soft illumination during viewings alongside movie posters signed by the likes of **Julia Roberts** and **Brad Pitt**.

And while the risk of modern minimalism may be austerity, Maydan relied on an angular design scheme to not only bring cohesive interest but also achieve comfort and function — from the first step through a massive one-of-kind steel pivot front door fabricated by **Adam McNaie**. Inside, overhangs create varied ceiling heights, with tall ceilings in the kitchen and living room on either side of a lower one in the dining room “so that it would feel cozier,” she says.

In the custom kitchen opposite a full wall of storage — essential to keeping a modern minimalist home looking tidy — are open shelves for useful personal touches. Maydan also spent considerable time with lighting designer **Tali Ariely** to select unique fixtures. “I personally really believe in lighting to create the atmosphere that you want and to add a lot of interest to the house,” Maydan says, “especially when you have those tall ceilings bringing in sunlight.”

Finishing touches add whimsy, such as pops of color against a largely neutral palette, alternating sizes in hardwood flooring by Listone Giordano, and custom elements like the steel-rail staircase leading down to the basement, which also pays homage to a similar one back in Maydan’s first house, where it all started. **NHC**