

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST HOME REDEFINED™

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THE NATURAL

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY BENJAMIN WOOLSEY

THIS HAT ISLAND HOUSE IS A STELLAR EXAMPLE OF GOOD THINGS COMING IN PAIRS—OR BETTER YET, COMPLEMENTARY HALVES. Leslie and Steve Ruiters, along with their longtime friend Nathan DeYoung, joined together to build a waterfront vacation retreat to share on the small island west of Seattle in Puget Sound. Architect Chris Serra, AIA, of Seattle firm BjarkoSerra Architects, and interior designer Julie Myers, ASID, of Seattle-based JMD Consultants, Inc., made the multifaceted but budget-conscious design dream a reality. The house is equal parts playground, family gathering place and nature preserve.

Leslie remembers watching two bald eagles along the beachfront one morning in a serene springtime mating ritual. “They’d stand on the beach next to each other and look out at the water,” she says. “Sometimes there are seals on the beach, and even gray whales circle the island in the spring.” Depending on which direction the eagles face, they could gaze at the Seattle skyline or the nearby islands of Puget Sound. There are also salmon estuaries close by, and a watershed abutting the property. As such, the Ruiters and DeYoung sought a building that would tread lightly upon the pristine landscape. But this would also be a stylish, casual place to have fun. Leslie’s family—which includes sons Joshua, 15, Michael, 10, and David, 8—usually accesses the house in their sailboat, a favorite pastime for their close-knit quintet.

There are two distinct buildings comprising the home: a single-level, glass-festooned kitchen and dining space for public gathering, and a more enclosed, two-story private structure with sleeping quarters.

ARCHITECT Chris Serra, BjarkoSerra Architects

INTERIOR DESIGNER Julie Myers, JMD Consultants, Inc.

HOME BUILDERS Karsen Keever and Kyle Keever, Keever & Associates

BEDROOMS 5 **BATHROOMS** 3 **SQUARE FEET** 2,313



**OCEAN INSPIRED**

Interior designer Julie Myers worked with the owners to select pieces of furniture that seem to levitate, emphasizing the motion of the water.

STYLE SELECTION

This chair defines comfort through its form, designed to suit the human body with studied proportions and simple geometry. *Theatre Armchair*, \$2,000; dwr.com



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 114

The house radiates golden light when seen from outside, but from within its confines guests are bathed in soothing whiteness. “I think having two separate buildings is only something that could have been done in a vacation home,” says Serra, whose firm previously designed a church that the Ruiters attend. “When beach houses get big, they become too bulky. We thought that would diminish the experience and the natural quality of the site. We wanted to tread as lightly as possible. This allowed us to have a more transparent, pristine structure along the beach. It also opened up some sculptural opportunities that wouldn’t have been there otherwise. Once you have two buildings, you can really play them against each other.” Although the home is quintessentially Northwest modern, Serra was also influenced by his years in Los Angeles and the work of mid-century architects like Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra. “I love the idea of a house breathing,” he says, “that fluid feeling between inside and out.”

Inside the stylish and inviting living area, a rich gray leather sofa and arm chair both seem to float on the concrete panel floor, as if in harmony with the slow-moving water visible just outside through floor-to-ceiling glass.

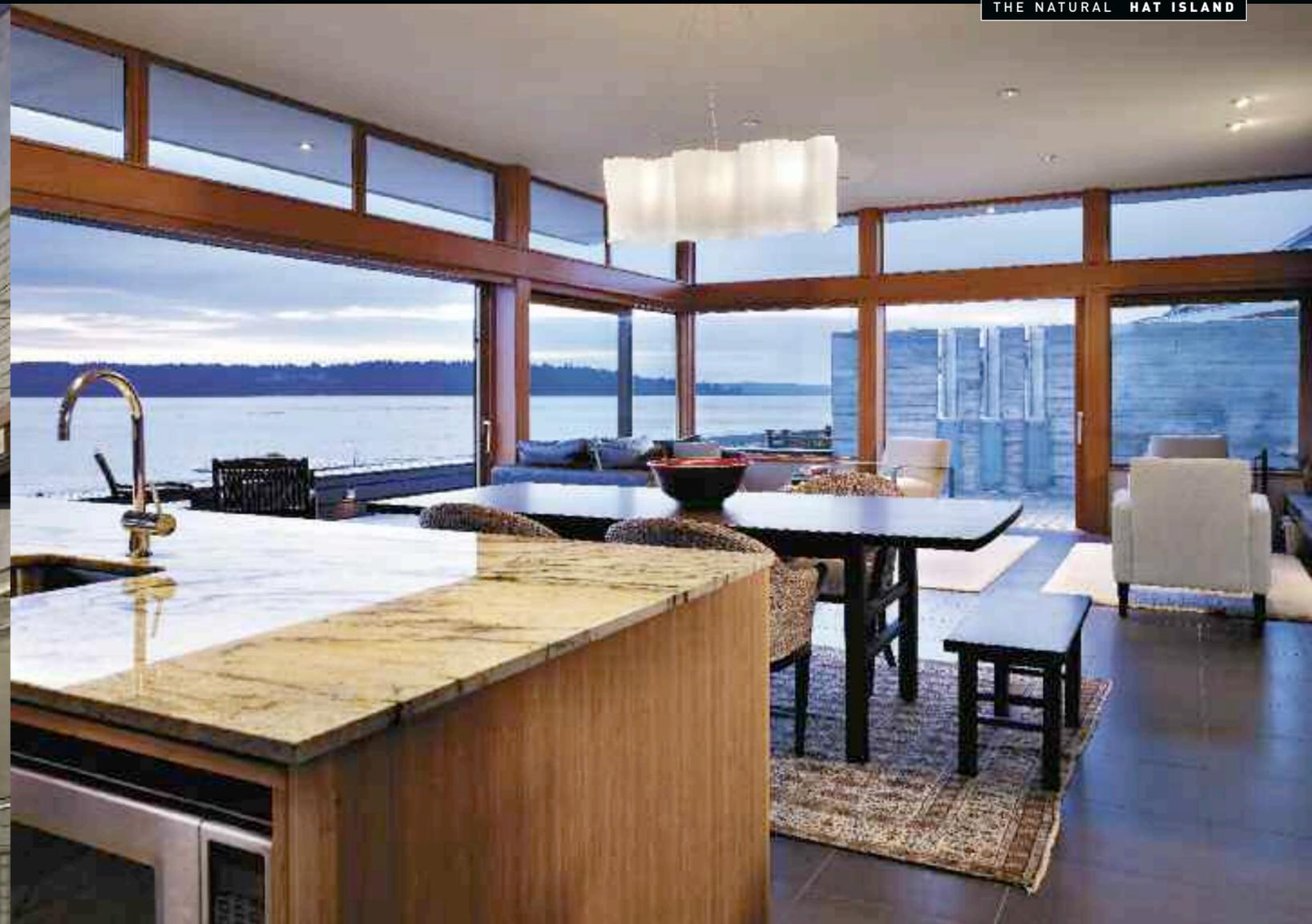
ALTHOUGH THE HOME IS QUINTESSENTIALLY NORTHWEST
MODERN, THE ARCHITECT **WAS INFLUENCED BY**
RUDOLPH SCHINDLER AND RICHARD NEUTRA



IT TAKES TWO
The home comprises two structures:
A public space fronts the property
with ample glass for optimum views,
while the sleeping area in back
provides cozy comfort.

**RUSTIC REFINEMENT**

A blend of refined hardwood and utilitarian materials like concrete and Plexiglas gives the modern home a sophisticated yet industrial slant.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 117

The color palette mirrors Puget Sound's tones of slate, blue and green. "I didn't want it to feel like such a polished gem that you couldn't hang out on the sofa with a cup of tea every day," says interior designer Julie Myers, who first worked with the Ruiters on their Seattle home. Instead, this was to be akin to a bed and breakfast, with active and playful living spaces, and quiet, restful bedroom atmospheres.

The home's broader yin-yang balance of public and private, and urban sophistication and rustic calm, captures the collaborative goal of the design team and owners. "It all was serendipitous," Leslie says. "We found the island by accident, but we just thought it was the most beautiful place on earth." **L**

INSIDE OUT

The design team's goal was to bring inside functions out and outside functions in, allowing picturesque views in all four directions and plenty of spots for the young boys to play.