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Garden Party

With a lighter and more serene outlook, a redesigned Whidbey Island abode celebrates nature.

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Interior Design: Christian Grevstad, Christian Grevstad Inc. Home Builder: Donald Heggnes, Heggnes Construction Inc.





Within the living room, designer Christian Grevstad made distinct spaces that can be combined for entertaining. In one area, he installed a table of his own design and Liaigre chairs. The Rug Art International floor covering is from Terris Draheim Outdoor.

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or Seattle-based interior designer Christian Grevstad, a self-described “neutralist,” warmth and interest can come just as easily from contrasting textures as from varying colors. This philosophy is illustrated in the Craftsman-style Whidbey

Island dwelling he recently redesigned for longtime clients. “There’s a harmony in this house; it’s relaxing,” he says. The abode, like its setting—a forested site overlooking Puget Sound—is “peaceful and serene, a departure from the more modern design of their previous homes,” Grevstad adds. Here, it was all about creating a gentler retreat where the owners could host family gatherings and spend time in their art studio, a short walk from the main residence.

“It’s a beautiful property, but it had become dated,” the designer continues. “I told them, ‘This is a good find. We can make it right.’” With the help of his design team and local general contractor Donald Heggnes, Grevstad replaced cork floors with natural stone pavers and refinished textured mauve walls with hand-applied plasterwork in warm shades of white. The interior designer also added new ceiling beams, moldings and fireplaces. The original windows were repainted, and the wood floors were bleached to help bring in more light. “It’s bright yet comfortable and calm,” he says.

Because the house welcomes many guests, Grevstad designed the living room as a multifunctional space. “I like to create rooms that accommodate various purposes—relaxation, conversation or entertainment,” he notes, explaining that family and friends can be engaged in different activities but still be together in the same space. When creating the fireplace wall’s mantel and bookcases, Grevstad’s team chose natural woods “to reference the logs on the nearby beach,” he says, and hung a painting by Washington-based artist Leo Adams opposite the picture window to amplify the home’s connection to place. But it’s the dining room’s views that especially capture attention. “It looks over Admiralty Inlet and into the trees, where

bald eagles often perch on snags. There’s always something to watch,” the interior designer says. To keep the focus on the wildlife during the day, the room is mostly unadorned, but key pieces (a diaphanous pendant light, sculptural floor lamp and photograph by Robert Mapplethorpe) “create some drama at night,” he describes.

According to Grevstad, the kitchen is the heart of the abode, with its French stone floors, new casework and counter-height fireplace plastered to look like stone. “I always love a fireplace in the kitchen, and here it both raises the ceiling height and anchors the space,” he adds. The room also houses some of his favorite custom elements, including a steel rack that hangs above the island and white-leather barstools, one of which is designed for two.

“By lightening the color of most of the walls, we’ve opened up the house, and the rooms appear visually bigger,” the designer continues. The one exception is the library. “The wood was still in good shape, so we left it all and just plastered the ceiling. It’s the reverse of the rest of the house, and I like that contrast,” Grevstad says. “The clients can go in and settle in front of the fireplace, watch television or work at the desk. There’s a little game table, too. It’s multipurpose, like the living room, but more intimate.” As is the primary bedroom, where the designer shifted to a richer, neutral palette that seems to magnify the greenery outside the windows.

While he sees the entire home as a celebration of everything he enjoys about design, Grevstad says that the garden room—a glazed and skylit structure—is one of his favorite spaces. “A magnificent landscape surrounds this home, and I wanted to celebrate it from the interior,” he explains. The team designed this room with a cocktail bar to make it a perfect place for parties and added several indoor trees (ficuses as well as fishtail and Kentia palms). “It almost feels like you are outside,” the designer notes.

“This house has a harmonious respect for nature,” Grevstad adds. “I hope it shows how beauty, peace and comfort can be achieved with texture and lighter colors—a palette that not only enhances what you see inside, but outside.” ■

Liaigre loveseats from Holland & Sherry take advantage of the living room's views while RH armchairs and a Paolo Croatto Metalworks coffee table allow for cozy conversations. Studio C completed the home's plasterwork.





Right: A breakfast nook occupies one corner of the kitchen. The banquette and Formations chair wear a Perennials textile and Liaigre linen, respectively. The Formations table is illuminated by a Jonathan Browning pendant.

Opposite: The kitchen's walnut cabinetry, fabricated by Jonathan Pauls, Inc., features marble countertops from Meta Marble & Granite. The range is by Wolf; its blackened-steel backsplash was crafted by Decorative Metal Arts.





Above: A chair from the designer's collection, covered in a Holland & Sherry fabric, sits near the library fireplace. The Mattaliano floor lamp is from Terris Draheim Outdoor, and the painting is by Paul Horiuchi.

Opposite: Grevstad preserved the library's oak paneling and beams but replastered the ceiling to establish what he calls a "comforting space." He added a Liaigre table and a chair of his own design to compose a place for the family to play games.





Above: The primary bathroom is home to a Croft House mirror, sconces by Saladino and a Gubi chair from Inform Interiors. Tile flooring from Architectural Surfaces complements the walls painted Benjamin Moore's Dove Wing.

Opposite: Artworks in the primary bedroom include a photograph by Aaron Leitz above the bed and a ceramic vessel by the homeowner. The RH bench rests atop a carpet from Terris Draheim Outdoor. A Holly Hunt lamp rounds out the space.

