

Life-Changing Design

A San Rafael home gets a new lease

Paulina Perrault knew exactly how to help her client Heather Ollison redesign her house. Raised by DIY house flippers in rural Minnesota, the Corte Madera-based designer has brought a lifetime of experience to her Sausalito firm. "My first project was my Barbie condo," she says. "I've been space planning since I was five."

Ollison was in the middle of a life transition and wanted her house to reflect more of her personal style. This made sense to Perrault, who had recently gone through a similar situation.



"I was a couple years ahead of her in this life journey," she says, adding that the two became friends during the process. "The sense of place becomes this incredible impact point."

Teaming with local architects Polsky Perlstein and Floyd Construction, Perrault (www.paulinaperrault.com) spent the next year and a half transforming Ollison's 3,000-square-foot San Rafael home. "Walls were moved, things were opened up," she says. "We grabbed little bits of space from different places to reprogram the house."

To take advantage of the property's spectacular water views over the San Francisco Bay and the Richmond Bridge, they opened the back of the house and expanded the deck. The dramatic four-paneled glass entry has a direct sight line from the house. "We wanted to see the view as soon as we looked through the front door," Perrault says. "Big sliders were an important part of the story."

Unique and intentional interior spaces reflect Ollison's personal aesthetic, which Perrault describes as "incredibly elegant, put together, and really clear. I never see her in anything but black and white," she says. Dividing the living-dining area, a vertical white



fireplace appears to float like a sculpture, a thin glass panel revealing the interior black steel of the firebox. The exquisite floor-to-ceiling bar was fashioned out of wire-brushed white oak with an ebony stain, the same natural finish as the backlit floating shelves. "This cabinetry is life changing," Perrault says. "I've never seen anything like it."

"I want our clients to feel like their home really

works and serves their lives," Perrault says. For Ollison, transformation took an unexpected turn when she decided to stay in her Sausalito rental. "In this new season of her life, she realized the house on a hill felt isolated," Perrault says. With six months left on the project Perrault, a seasoned designer, took this adjustment in stride.

The furniture that was on its way to San Rafael was rerouted to Sausalito or put

A client with a clear sense of design direction made this home a dream project.

into storage, and Ollison listed her home for lease. They found a renter within three days — a neighbor who lived up the street and was recently single. "It's perfect for him," Perrault says. "He's in transition, too; this was exactly what he needed."