

## GHOST STORY

WRITTEN BY CAREN KURLANDER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW MILLMAN

"IT WAS WHAT PEOPLE CALL A 'GHOST WINERY,'" SAYS DESIGNER JEFFRY WEISMAN, OF THE SAN FRANCISCO FIRM FISHER WEISMAN, REGARDING THE HUMBLE BEGINNINGS OF HIS CLIENT'S NAPA VALLEY RESIDENCE. "The structure of the house was built from old Napa Valley stone in 1880. It had been constructed as a winery but had been abandoned for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century." The two-story building was remodeled into a house in the 1980s, but the workmanship didn't do the structure justice. "There was a roughness everywhere," says Weisman. "It had exposed plumbing, really distressed farm floors and hollow-core 1970s doors. There was nothing of quality in the interior that you could keep." So Weisman, along with principal Andrew Fisher, set out to create a sophisticated interior for his clients while honoring the history of the winery in the process.

"Our vision from the start was that the elegance and importance of the structure deserved a very upgraded interior," says Weisman, who, with Fisher, devised a concept to help inspire that transformation. "We thought that, of all of Napa's cultural roots, the Italian, Spanish and Portuguese influences were the sexiest.

**ARCHITECTURE** Andrew Fisher and Jeffrey Weisman, Fisher Weisman

**INTERIOR DESIGN** Andrew Fisher and Jeffrey Weisman, Fisher Weisman

**HOME BUILDER** SBD Construction & Development

**BEDROOMS** 1 **BATHROOMS** 2 **SQUARE FEET** 3,600





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**WARM FRONT**

Walnut ceiling coffers cover exposed plumbing in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century stone-winery-turned-residence designed by Fisher Weisman in Napa Valley. Comfortable upholstered pieces, all by Fisher Weisman, keep the atmosphere relaxed in the library. Cowtan & Tout's Bermuda fabric covers the armchairs, and the ottoman is upholstered with a Brunschwig & Fils textile. The rug is from Stark.





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So we came up with the story that the building had been constructed by a Portuguese immigrant who wanted some of his Old World feel in his New World house." From there, the overhaul started. The designers, working with builders SBD Construction & Development in St. Helena, hollowed out the entire core of the house and established an open floor plan with public rooms on the first floor and a master suite upstairs. The lackluster materials were replaced with rough-hewn reclaimed-oak floors, Venetian plaster walls, mahogany plank doors with ebony tracery, and weathered walnut coffers and ceiling beams to disguise the exposed plumbing. The formal details create an elegant atmosphere, but the worn surfaces—teamed with the old stone walls—infuse the space with softness.

#### OPEN INVITATION

Napa's Mediterranean influences inspired the designers' furniture choices, as evidenced in the entry, where a late-16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish walnut table from R.M. Barokh Antiques in Los Angeles stands beneath a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Florentine mirror found at Urban Chateau Antiquités & Décoration in San Francisco. The table lamps, made from antique Chinese vases, are from Ridgway House in St. Helena. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century French alabaster pendant light and entry sconces are from Paul Ferrante in LA.



Formal furnishings complement the exposed stone wall and reclaimed oak floors of the dining room. Custom-made chairs from Paul Ferrante encircle a Randolph & Hein table. A Fortuny cotton is "absolutely the perfect choice for dressy but not fancy," says designer Jeffrey Weisman. The ornate chandelier and standing candelabra are also from Paul Ferrante.

**TABLE TALK**







#### STAIR MASTER

The total interior transformation included replacing the existing big, clunky staircase with a graceful curved stair made from iron and white oak. Paul Ferrante's Phoenix chandelier, custom-made in an oval shape, lights the space. The pedestal and Latch urn are from Michael Taylor Designs.

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"Clearly the structure is very old," says Weisman. "So we wanted the interior to feel refreshed and maintained but not like a brand new house." Following that direction, the designers replaced a bulky concrete fireplace with a polished mahogany-and-antiqued-glass design in the voluminous living room. "It was part of our romantic Portuguese concept," says Weisman, who grouped two mohair-covered Ebanista sofas with a custom marble-topped coffee table and 19<sup>th</sup>-century French armchair. "The sofas' high backs give you a sense of enclosure in a space that's so tall."





**STONE AGE**

The living room's tall cathedral ceiling was tempered with highback Ebanista sofas, covered with Maharam mohair. A Jean de Merry coffee table was customized by the designers with a marble top, and the 19<sup>th</sup>-century armchair is from Ralf's Antiques in LA. A pared-down iron chandelier by Fisher Weisman lends a rustic touch to the room.





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French doors flank the fireplace, and Portuguese-inspired upholstered banquettes are poised in both corners. One is paired with a coffee table and chairs, and the other doubles as a dining table for intimate meals. "You have the ability to be cozy in every part of the room, and none of it feels grandiose for a small group," says Weisman.

For larger groups, the dining room features a round Randolph & Hein table surrounded by custom chairs, covered with a cotton Fortuny print. The golds and browns of the "elegant country" fabric, as Weisman describes it, perfectly complement the exposed stone wall and balance the formal lines of the furniture. A striking carved-and-gilded chandelier and freestanding candelabra, all from Paul Ferrante, illuminate the space in dramatic fashion.

#### MIRROR, MIRROR

Antiqued mirror panels set into custom walnut cabinetry create a statement-making kitchen. The designers eschewed hardware in favor of molded-top drawers for a seamless look. Calacatta Oro marble counters flow up to the stone walls, which are protected with a sheet of tempered clear glass above the Wolf stove. The hardware is from Nanz.





**CORNER TABLE**

Fisher Weisman designed a Portuguese-style banquette, accented with 19<sup>th</sup>-century Italian silk-velvet pillows from Kathleen Taylor—The Lotus Collection in San Francisco, to carve out an intimate space within the large living room. Paul Ferrante custom chairs, covered with Fortuny fabric, and a twisted-base table from Panache Designs in LA offer a cozy dining option.

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“We took the approach of putting jewelry throughout the house at different scales,” says Weisman. “The hardware is custom and very jewel-like, and a lot of the chandeliers are very fine and elegant. They become sparkling elements against the soft architectural materials.”

A hint of shimmer shines through in other areas of the house as well. The library, appointed with comfortable Fisher Weisman-designed pieces covered with mohairs and velvets, is set off by a small mirrored bar in the corner. And, while the jewel-like detail lends depth to the room, the designers used a heavier hand in the kitchen. “The kitchen is on the back side of the house,







**GARDEN VIEW**

In the library, a Fisher Weisman-designed loveseat is upholstered with a deep-red mohair by Gretchen Bellinger in Albany, New York. A subtle Bergamo pattern on the pillows from Donghia lends texture, and the reading lamps are by Galerie des Lampes and were purchased at Tod Carson in LA.









#### SWIM SEASON

An existing pool house was remodeled into a casual indoor/outdoor retreat. The designers furnished the living area with rattan furniture from their collection with The Wicker Works at Sloan Miyasato in San Francisco and chose a large-scale black-and-white Manuel Canovas print. Outside, Giati umbrellas shade chaise lounges by Thomas Bartlett Interiors in Napa. The red-lacquered steel coral chandelier was custom-designed by Fisher Weisman.





**GARDEN OF EATING**

Existing tables and Thomas Bartlett chairs create a magical backdrop for frequent dinner parties beneath the property's olive trees. For even larger gatherings, the owners "put tables down the length of the orchard with lanterns everywhere," says Weisman. "They have phenomenal parties under the olives."





#### HOUSE PROUD

Fisher Weisman redesigned the 19<sup>th</sup>-century structure around the existing stone walls. "Napa Valley stone has an incredible warmth to it," says Weisman. "It has the most gorgeous soft tones and textures." A row of second-story windows overlooks the property's gardens.

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which gets a little less light," explains Weisman. "So we used antiqued mirror in the cabinets to make it sparkle and reflect the outside."

Through this creative attention to detail and careful selection of materials, furnishings and custom touches, the designers created a timeless interior that feels at home in the old stone winery. "It's a 19<sup>th</sup>-century building crafted from the native material of the valley," says Weisman. "It has a very rooted, Old World feel, and I think everything we did on the inside was meant to enhance that and make it function spectacularly for today." **L**