

## Absolutely Fab-ulous

Alison Damonte and Signum Architecture defy design expectations of prefab living

by **LINDSEY SHOOK** photography by **BRUCE DAMONTE**



In the kitchen, the vibrant backsplash is by Fireclay Tile and the island is made by Urban Hardwoods.



We can all agree, building a home from the ground up often takes years off of your life. However, when it came to the construction of a vacation home in Calistoga, this creative client had other plans. “The client brought the team together,” says Brian Abramson, founder and CEO of Method Homes. “Being an innovator in his own space, he was interested in different means and methods of construction.”

The Bay Area-based homeowner enlisted Signum Architecture and Alison Damonte Design to customize a modular system by Method Homes that pushed the possibilities of off-site fabricated design. “Our client was keen on the modular concept and Method Homes was one of the two or three companies that we initially considered,” says Jarrod Denton, a partner at Signum Architecture. “After

reviewing their ability to customize the modules and accommodate a site-built living room, Method Homes was the clear choice.”

Signum’s overall design direction focused on creating unexpected moments and masking the recognizably modular details while devising a defined architectural statement. “The initial site-built design incorporated three key elements: siting, transparency and elevation,” says Denton. “When transitioning to the modular concept all of these elements carried over, we had to reinterpret each one in order to fit within modular design. The vision was established and then the house was divided and optimized for the modular program.”

They worked with the Method team on the collaborative process by resolving as many design

Vintage Brazilian Rosewood chairs and a single chair by Pierre Paulin surround a custom sofa that faces the open wall to the pool terrace.

## THE INNOVATORS

A chandelier from Lindsey Adelman hangs above an Egg Collective dining table that is surrounded by vintage chairs by Matteo Grassi. The sconces are from Chen Chen & Kai Williams.



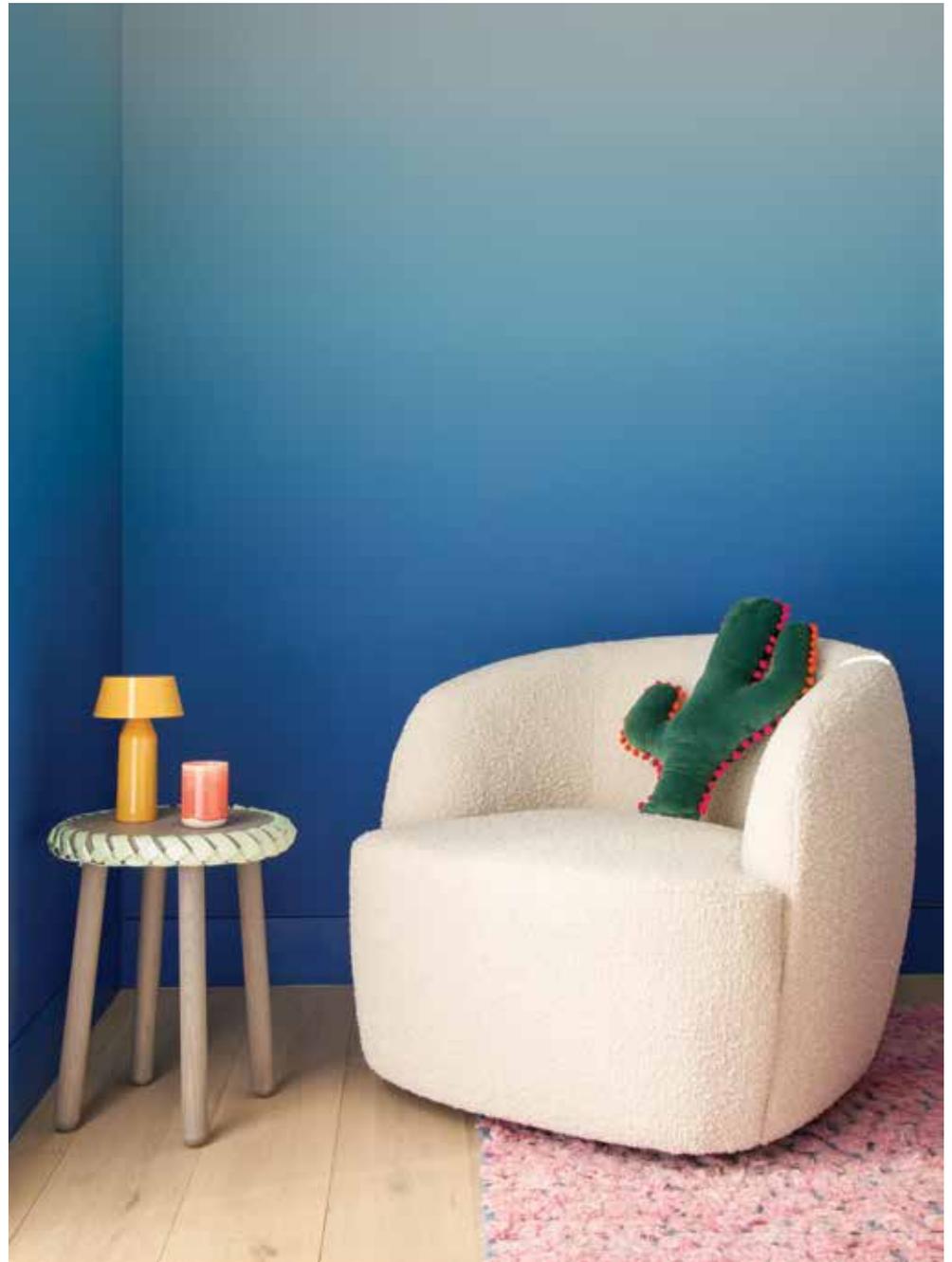
"From the earliest sketches, one theme that continued to play out was the horizontality of the structure and the simplicity of working with just three exterior materials," says Jarrod Denton of Signum Architecture on the design of this modular home in Calistoga.





details as possible prior to fabrication, making the installation process more seamless. “This is a more custom and detailed home than most prefab projects,” says Abramson. “Because it was a hybrid of off-site and on-site construction, we were able to incorporate more custom elements in the home such as the large expanses of glass openings, a complex home automation system, built-in home audio, trimless doors with concealed hinges and other more personalized details.”

The structure, which sits on an expansive lot, takes full advantage of the indoor/outdoor living and provides ample room for entertaining, while the interiors capture the family’s spirited personality. “While we were responsible for pushing boundaries with the furnishings, the client’s own art collection brought a very unique and personal perspective to a project that is, at its very basic level, constructed from a preselected kit of parts,” says Alison Damonte of the interior design. “This client is a dreamer,



an entrepreneur and a visionary, and those ideas are absolutely apparent in their art collection, which includes cutting-edge photography and video art by contemporary artists including Leo Villareal, Laurie Simmons, Philip-Lorca diCorcia and Roe Ethridge.”

Having worked with the clients on the design of their main residence, Damonte already had a strong understanding of who they are. “Going into this project we had a good understanding of their aesthetic, their preferences for color, design period, etc. and most importantly, how

**FROM LEFT:** The Geo hand-painted wallcovering by Porter Teleo creates a wow moment in the powder room; In the daughter’s room, the Aurora wallpaper by Calico creates a cool and soothing vibe.

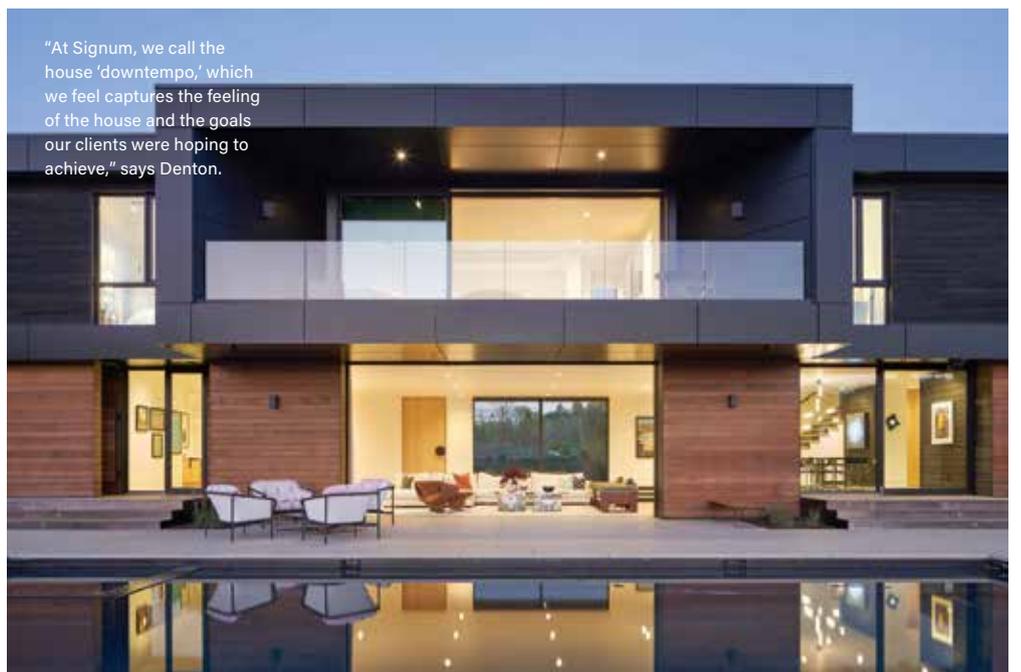
## THE INNOVATORS

A custom bed covered in Romo fabric sits atop an area rug by Mark Nelson in the master bedroom, which seamlessly opens to the outdoor terrace.



they live as a family,” she notes. “They are adventurous and trusting and really let us do what we wanted—a total design dream! We were heavily inspired by their love of modern art and music.”

The final result is a phenomenal home that defies all perceptions of modular living, infused with a highly collected style. “Before working on this project, I assumed that modular homes were rather basic, not well-constructed and offered little opportunity for imagination or customization,” says Damonte. “Those ideas were all challenged in this process, and I now have a new perspective.” Also surprised by the process, Jarrod Denton of Signum notes, “To use the music analogy, this is not a one-hit wonder. The more time you spend there, the greater appreciation you have for how this house responds to its setting.”



“At Signum, we call the house ‘downtempo,’ which we feel captures the feeling of the house and the goals our clients were hoping to achieve,” says Denton.