CALIFORNIA
STYLE & CULTURE

Men's Edition

ALEXANDER LUDWIG CHECKS IN

With *The White Lotus* on the horizon,
his next act is about to get very interesting

Wild at Heart

A Sea Ranch family home shaped by love and landscape

Star Tours

The architect who brought George Lucas's museum down to Earth

The Makers' Moment

The studios putting a modern spin on made-by-hand

FALL 2026

Clockwise from top left: In the primary bedroom loft, canvas shades balance light and privacy, with bed and side tables by Noah Cohen and carpet by Commune for Christopher Farr; linoleum covers the cabinetry, countertop, and backsplash in one of the kitchens, with Douglas fir millwork offering a quieter counterpoint above; a deep blue, custom-mixed from Lawrence Halprin's original Sea Ranch landscape plans, defines the central stair volume. *Opposite:* Condominium 1, the first structure built at Sea Ranch in 1965, sits atop a jagged cliff on a site master-planned by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, its stepped form following the natural slope of the hillside down to the Pacific.







Ten miles of raw Sonoma County coastline, hammered by wind and Pacific fog, isn't where most people would build a utopia. But 61 years ago, developer Al Boeke and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin set out to prove that a community could belong to the landscape rather than impose itself upon it. What emerged was a cluster of weathered structures by architect Charles Moore and his collaborators, still one of America's most compelling experiments in architecture and landscape.

Mike and Sharon Matas had spent a decade returning to Sea Ranch before finally claiming a place of their own. They purchased two adjacent condos in the development's first building for themselves and their two daughters. Commune Design's task was to bring the units together without erasing the character that made each worth preserving.

Commune began work in September 2021 and completed the project in April 2025. One condo, 900 square feet with a lofted bedroom and one bathroom, had survived largely intact since 1965. The other, a 1,060-square-foot, two-bedroom home, had been renovated in the 1990s in ways that had muted its original character. The goal was to unite their architectural language while allowing each to retain its own entrance, living room, kitchen, and dining area.

Because the building steps down the hillside, the units' floor plates don't align, so Commune devised an internal connection instead: a catwalk leading to a redwood barn door, nearly invisible but for the oversize maroon arrow painted across it, a cheeky homage to Barbara Stauffacher Solomon's supergraphics at Sea Ranch's Moonraker Athletic Center.

For Commune, it was more than just another renovation. "As a California firm, we've always looked to Sea Ranch as a kind of touchstone," says the firm's cofounder, Roman Alonso. "As we spent time in the archives and visited Charles Moore's own condominium, the mythology around Sea Ranch started to fall away. The architecture was adaptive, economical, often improvisational. Rather than feeling like guests in someone else's vision, we felt invited to participate in the same process of experimentation and problem-solving."

Continuing the experiment, rather than correcting it, became the guiding principle. There was little appetite for a renovation that strayed far from the original architecture, with a palette that was predominantly redwood with touches of Douglas fir and cedar. Commune stayed within that vocabulary, combining new lumber with reclaimed boards and treating the existing wood as an asset rather than something to replace.

"We began to see wood not as a single finish but as a spectrum of species, tones, grain patterns, and patinas, and we saw textures to be leveraged in the design," Alonso says. Paint became a tool rather than a decoration, its custom colors sampled directly

"Inside, you're sheltered, surrounded by the warmth of the wood, with a front-row seat to it all."—*Roman Alonso*

Living on the Edge

At Sea Ranch, a 1965 architectural experiment is reworked for warmth, play, and modern family life against a wild coastal backdrop

Words by KERSTIN CZARRA Photography by STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON



Wegner chairs and a Saarinen table anchor the dining area, lit by a paper-and-bamboo pendant from Kojima Shoten. *Opposite, clockwise from top left:* The building's craggy, rough-hewn form takes its cue from the windswept, dramatic stretch of coastline; built-in storage at the entry was designed around the family's daily rituals; a J.J.M. Hoogervorst wall light illuminates the second unit's living room, centered on a custom cocktail table and a daybed.





"Sea Ranch as a place is austere, but the architecture is dynamic in a way that invites play."—*Roman Alonso*

from Halprin's original landscape plans for Sea Ranch. In the kitchens and bathrooms, wood gives way to linoleum countertops, cabinet fronts, and backsplashes; upstairs, cork lines the bathroom floors and closets.

Canvas brings another layer of texture. Commune fabricated its own version of the utilitarian roller shades found in Moore's home from natural canvas ripstop, while also re-creating the canopy he had designed above his sleeping area. "Sea Ranch as a place is austere," Alonso says. "It's windy and dramatic, and the architecture responds to that environment in its jagged, rough-hewn forms. But inside, the architecture is dynamic in a way that naturally invites play."

That sense of play was especially fitting for a family with two young daughters. Freestanding lofts, interior towers, and unexpected sightlines left places to climb, hide, and explore, while Moore's original use of color and supergraphics adds to the sense of discovery. The re-created canopy, Alonso says, turns the bed into "a kind of architectural pillow fort."

The same sensibility informed the practicalities of family life. "Nothing is too precious, but everything has been thought through," he adds. "We thought carefully about where you walk in, where you take off your shoes, where you stash your muddy boots." Both homes were upgraded to modern standards, using durable, time-tested materials where possible.

Linoleum is perhaps the clearest example of that approach. Although it wasn't in the 1965 design, "it felt completely at home in the 1960s setting," Alonso says. "It's durable and natural, and it has an everyday quality that suits the way the house is meant to be lived in."

The Matases arrived with a clear sense of how they wanted to live, and even how they wanted the interiors to look. Early on, they handed Alonso a self-compiled book that outlined their



philosophy, "spaces that provide the comfort and ease to create and play," inspired by "the bareness of open spaces and blank canvases." Instead of fixed built-ins, Commune responded with furniture that could shift with the family: swivel chairs, ottomans, floor cushions, and sheepskin rugs.

"The units aren't overly programmed or predetermined," Alonso says. The same thinking extends to the connection between the two homes, which can open to let the family spread out or close when the spaces need to function independently. For Alonso, the essence of comfort is "living in an environment that has been considered so thoroughly that it invisibly addresses your needs," taking "the friction out of daily life." Even the smallest details were approached with that logic.

The chess set is a case in point. A family ritual, the game inspired Commune to commission artist David O'Brien to carve a set from multiple wood species, housed in an old-growth redwood crate that doubles as the board. Maple and ebony squares are inlaid into the lid, while the interior is carved to hold each piece in place.

But the crate is more than storage. "It is also the platform on which the family plays," Alonso says, allowing them to set up a game anywhere, from a sheepskin rug in the living room to a sunny window bench. Draped in linen, it becomes a small table where the girls can sit for lunch.

If you stand inside the Matas home without knowing anything about Sea Ranch's history, Alonso says there's still one thing you would feel. "Safe," he says. "It's not an easy journey to Sea Ranch. When you arrive, you really feel like you've reached the end of the world... Inside, you're sheltered, surrounded by the warmth of the wood, with a front-row seat to it all."