

CONDÉ NAST

# House & Garden

*Keep - Jonny's Big Sun*

## carefree living

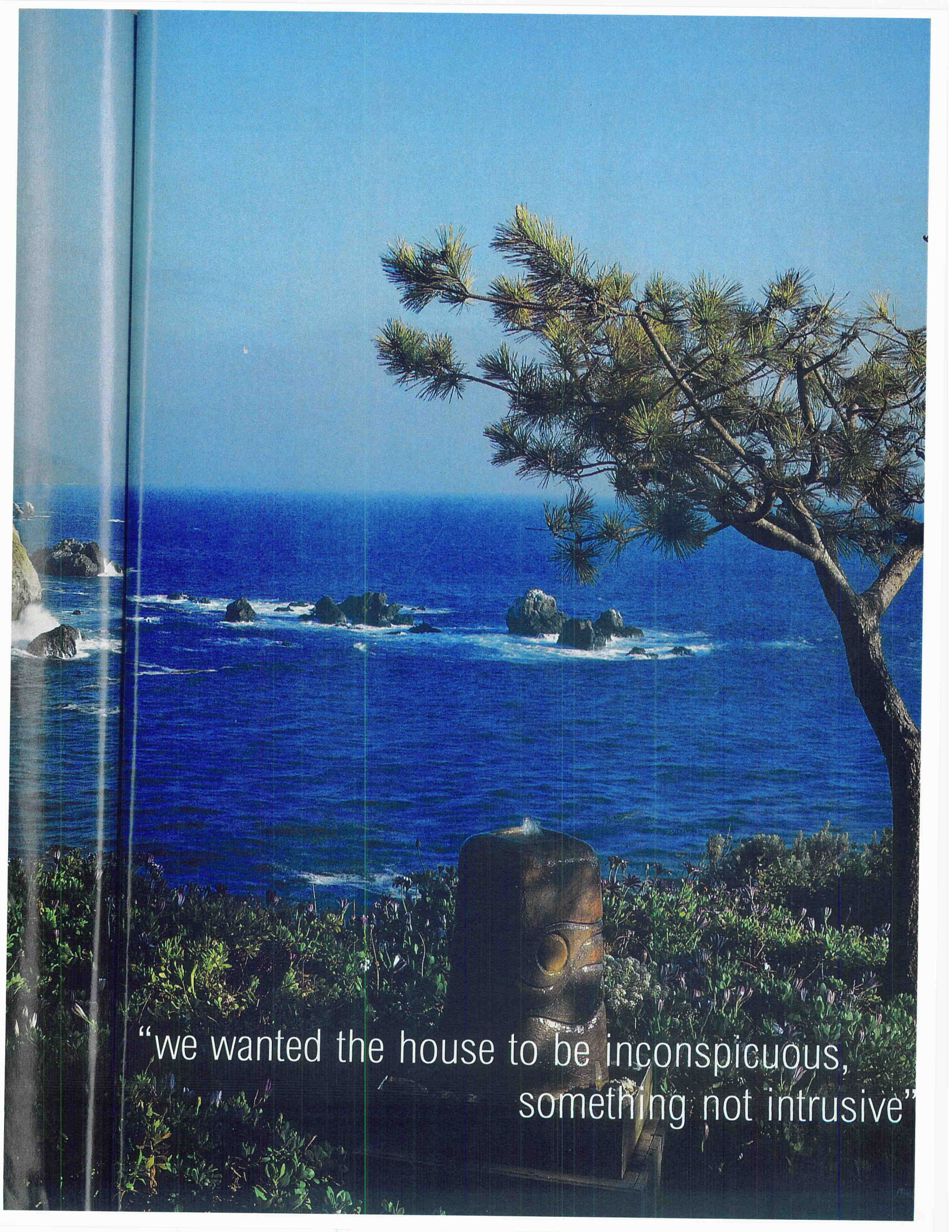
SEASIDE RETREATS

JUDITH  
KRANTZ'S  
Place  
in the Sun



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“we wanted the house to be inconspicuous,  
something not intrusive”





The rawness and color of Big Sur are echoed in a locally made redwood-trunk table, a custom carpet by Edward Fields Inc., a glass bowl and ashtray, opposite page, from L.A.'s Retro Gallery, and, below, caned Dan Johnson chairs from the 1950s.



**b** LINK AS YOU CAREER DOWN Highway 1 through Big Sur, the tumultuous stretch of northern California coast between Carmel and San Simeon, and you could easily miss the most pronounced mark humankind has made on the area—a post office, general store, and parking lot. The roadway itself hardly dispels the primordial ruggedness of the sheer, densely forested walls of the Santa Lucia mountains as they plunge into the sea.

It seems altogether too ravishing a place for domestic life. But a few hardy—and lucky—people have managed to carve out niches for themselves in these cliffs—literally, in some cases. For more than thirty years, Tony Staude has occupied one of Big Sur's most magnificent sites: Anderson Canyon, a deep gorge abundant with redwoods and waterfalls.

Staude, the retired chairman of Bergen Brunswig, a national wholesale drug firm, bought the property as soon as he learned it was available, in 1965. He had heard descriptions of it before: his wife, Marguerite, a sculptor, had spent the night there years earlier, in an artist's cabin. "The little cabin was right over a stream," Staude recalls. "And she heard music. She never forgot it."

The earlier history of the property is even more colorful. The prisoners from the California penal system who built





# cliff dwelling

a sixties jewel on the northern california coast invites the pacific indoors

WRITTEN BY JAMES REGINATO

PHOTOGRAPHED BY TODD EBERLE

PRODUCED AND STYLED BY PAUL FORTUNE



The modern meets the ancient in Tony Staude's living room, where pre-Columbian statuary from Oaxaca, Mexico, far right, shares space with paired Barcelona chairs, a 1940s custom-made glass-topped dining table, this page, and a fireplace designed for the house by George Brook.







In the master bedroom, rocks team up with a classic lounge chair by Ray and Charles Eames. The Staudes found the handloomed bedspread and rug in Morocco. Sources, see back of book.

Highway 1, which was completed in 1937, were housed in a camp on the land. “When we acquired it, [the canyon] was a morass of abandoned cars, weeds, poison oak,” Staude recalls. “The workers had lived in tents, but various structures remained, including an infirmary.”

Over the next few years, as the land was cleared, the Staudes—Marguerite died in 1988—pondered what sort of house to build. “We didn’t want to impose on this beautiful area. We wanted the house to be as inconspicuous as possible, something not intrusive,” explains Staude.

Everything became clear when they saw another house recently completed in the area by George Brook-Kothlow, an architect based in Carmel. The house was constructed entirely of redwood timbers that once had been part of a bridge on the coastal highway. The timber became available thanks to the road’s popularity: all the well-worn wooden overpasses were being replaced with concrete structures.

Thrilled with Brook-Kothlow’s design, the Staudes gave him their own commission, after buying the timbers from another dismantled bridge for all of \$1,500. Construction began in 1969 and took two years. The timbers were hauled into Monterey, graded, cut and numbered, and, finally, brought to Anderson Canyon for assembly. At Staude’s insistence, all the original markings, bolts, and paint were left on

the planks. The project was fortunate to have a superintendent of construction whose father had built the bridge. “He was extremely inspired,” says Staude.

Both the architect and his clients sought to create a seamlessness between the house and its surroundings. “We wanted to feel that nature would come indoors,” says Staude. To that end, a floor-to-ceiling wall of glass is the only thing separating the living room from the spectacular Pacific. “It’s a very transparent house,” says Brook-Kothlow, who still practices in Carmel. Granite boulders sprout from the floor of sandblasted aggregate (concrete embedded with pebbles), which Brook-Kothlow used both inside the house and in its outdoor terraces.

While the Staudes labored intensively in their garden, they sought to work in harmony with Big Sur’s rough landscape of redwoods, cypresses, pines, and more than a hundred types of wildflowers. “We didn’t want anything too formal,” Staude says. “That wouldn’t have been appropriate.”

After all, as Staude knows, he lives on the cliffs of Big Sur under a sort of truce with the elements. “Nature is overpowering here,” he says. “We have tremendous storms in winter. Inside the house, you’re aware of them, but you always feel safe. It’s a great privilege to live here.”

James Reginato is an editor at large of this magazine.