

alameda



Designer Ruth Livingston chose weatherproof pieces from Henry Hall's Sienna collection for dockside seating; client Patricia Garfield's two boats are moored just beyond.



# A LIFE aquatic

FOR AN ALAMEDA CLIENT WHO PREFERS BOATS TO HOUSES, DESIGNER RUTH LIVINGSTON TRANSFORMED A BAYSIDE CONDO INTO A RESTFUL PLACE TO DOCK.

BY JULIE CARLSON PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSHUA MCHUGH STYLING BY REGINE HECK



**BEFORE** To create a sense of airiness, Livingston removed the stairwell's enclosure and commissioned iron railings (above), inspired by boat construction plans, from sculptor Kyle Reicher—who also created the coffee table base (above right).

Some people are born with an affinity for water that defies explanation. They get fidgety when they're too far from the sea, they sport year-round tans, they get a faraway look in their eye when they're on dry land for too long. Patricia Garfield is one of those people. Growing up in Hawaii, she learned to love the ocean at an early age. She began sailing when she was seven, after her family moved to Southern California. "My father was a sailor," she says. "I always had a dream, for as long as I can remember, of circumnavigating the world."

But for 30 years, Garfield was a captain of industry rather than of a sailing ship. "I was completely focused on my corporate career in worldwide marketing," she says.

When she acquired a Catalina 470 sailboat from Farallone Yachts a few years ago, her priorities began to shift. "I docked the boat at the dealership. Sometimes I would stay overnight on the boat, and in the morning I'd put on my suit and my high heels and set off for the office. Everyone else on the docks was in flip-flops and T-shirts." Garfield had one of those "What am I doing with my life?" moments.

"I started to get this notion that perhaps I could buy Farallone, which sells sailboats and power boats. When I approached the owner, it turned out he was ready to sell," she says. "Of course, my accountant was horrified. But I had a gut feeling this was the right thing to do, even though I didn't know a hoot about the marine industry." Not to mention that she's the only female owner of a high-end yacht brokerage in a very male-oriented industry.

Garfield's accountant can rest easy. "I've quadrupled the business," she says. "I've updated the office space and added more salespeople. My background in marketing has been extremely useful."

Livingston's Mercury dining chairs, upholstered in a wave-patterned fabric, surround the driftwood-like circular table. Bamboo shades and exotic light sculptures complement the South Seas mood.





**BEFORE** Livingston chose to resurface the existing run-of-the-mill cabinets in mahogany with shagreen-embossed leather inserts; mahogany strips are also set into the bamboo flooring.



Another dramatic move on Garfield's part: She bought a condominium in Alameda, a short boat ride away from Farallone's offices, where she can entertain clients and generally promote the kind of carefree, sea-mist-sprayed, sun-drenched life that sailors pursue. Not to mention the fact that the condo came with two boat slips, a coveted amenity in the circles she moves in.

Happiest on the water: Patricia Garfield (left) and Ruth Livingston soak up the sun aboard one of Garfield's boats.

The condo itself, however, was far from shipshape. Built in the 1960s, it featured certain dreaded markers of that era—a boxy layout, wall-to-wall carpet and an awkwardly sited fireplace that blocked the water view.

What's a seafaring woman to do? Get in her boat, of course. One afternoon, after a cruise to Tiburon and a leisurely lunch at Sam's Grill, Garfield took a stroll along Ark Row. She wandered into Ruth Livingston's studio and began chatting with Livingston, an Israeli-born interior designer. What began as a casual afternoon encounter led to a design collaboration resulting in a total overhaul of her living quarters.

"We didn't want the interiors to be predictable," says Livingston. "I approached this project like a resort. I wanted Patricia to feel like she was on vacation."

The first order was to reconfigure the main living space, which involved taking down two walls and concealing two corner posts with vertical cabinetry units. Next, Livingston mirrored one entire wall, extending the mirror to the outdoor deck, doubling the space visually. She also opened up the stairwell, which had been enclosed in drywall.

Thematically, Livingston took her cues from the boating world. "I didn't want to reference traditional nautical

Seashell-like sconces by Ayala Serfaty cast a warm glow in the sanctuary of the powder room; the striking sink basin is carved from a single granite boulder.

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**BEFORE** Livingston gutted the powder room, removing an awkward dividing wall that made the space feel cramped. She replaced the hopelessly outdated sink unit with a custom mahogany console topped with a limestone slab.

emblems like anchors or red-white-and-blue color schemes.” Instead, she invoked what she calls “a South Seas aesthetic,” using bamboo flooring inlaid with mahogany (bamboo is frequently used in high-end yacht design, and the mahogany recalls elegant vintage Chris Craft boats, according to Garfield), raffia-covered walls, bamboo window shades and shagreen-embossed leather accents. She commissioned the graceful banister and railings of hand-patinated, oxidized steel from sculptor Kyle Reicher, who drew upon old boatbuilding blueprints in his design (the lyrical numerals that adorn the banisters recall the footnotes on the drawings).

Numerous built-ins suggest the living quarters of a luxury yacht and serve as display cases for Garfield’s collection of art, which includes a brilliant yellow Dale Chihuly glass sculpture reminiscent of a jellyfish. Mahogany kitchen cabinetry inset with shagreen-embossed leather continues the marine theme, while the new kitchen return adds a boatlike curve to the space.

Huge resin-coated silk light sculptures by Israeli artist Ayala Serfaty anchor one end of the room, resembling mysteriously illuminated sea creatures. A pair of sconces by Serfaty also adorns the powder room, lending a soft, intimate glow. The powder room walls are covered with silk in rust and oceanic green tones from Silk Dynasty. Designed by Livingston, the vanity is an oval of mahogany with an unusual carved granite boulder sink. “I like to take my clients places they haven’t been,” says Livingston.

Garfield is no stranger to adventure: indeed, she made nautical history in 2005 by completing the Transpacific Yacht Race from Los Angeles to Honolulu with fellow San Francisco sailor Diane Murray—the first double-handed female crew to accomplish such a feat.

The name of their sailing vessel? *Charmed Life*—which could just as easily describe Garfield’s existence on the water in Alameda. ■