



Suzanne Biaggi calls her designs sculptural landscapes, sites designed around her monolithic sculptures. Here, steps lead up to a concrete deck at the Lund-Kival home.



Petaluma sculptor and landscape designer Suzanne Biaggi created this runnel of water leading to a monolith with a waterfall in the back yard of Lia Lund and Scott Kival in Marshall, overlooking Tomales Bay. It's all part of a larger, striking contemporary garden that features a mix of surfaces, textures, natural colors and elevations.

Art and nature live in stately balance at this home on Tomales Bay

# A Sculpted Life

By MEG McCONAHEY  
Photos by JEFF KAN LEE  
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

**B**eyond the banks of sliding doors, hard surfaces spread out in curves and angles and tiny steps.

On a wintry morning, a mist swirls almost diaphanously over this back "garden" of stone and concrete, so fine you can still see in soft focus the silvery expanse of Tomales Bay on the horizon.

A shadow casts the delicately detailed outline of a cypress along a bed of crushed stone. It provides the only hint of plant life immediately visible in this smooth landscape that seems surprisingly deferential to nature despite its bare minimum of greenery.

This stark landscape attracts notice without distracting from the views. Both nature and human artistry co-exist in quiet accord, a perfect balance for Lia Lund and Scott Kival, self-described "farmers" — they tend a large olive grove nearby — with a decidedly modern-



Owner Lia Lund and designer Suzanne Biaggi.

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## SCULPTURE: Landscape seen as organic

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ist aesthetic.

The pair commissioned Petaluma sculptor and landscape designer Suzanne Biaggi to frame the space between their home set on a windy hillside and the moody estuary beyond. The result: a cunning mix of surfaces, textures, natural colors and elevations.

It's what Biaggi calls her sculptural landscapes, sites specifically designed around her monolithic sculptures.

In this case, the focal point is a fountain, two split vertical pillars presiding over a smooth bluestone stage. A gurgle of water spills out of a craggy top, down into a narrow runnel of gently undulating liquid.

"They're interdependent," said Biaggi, who has won multiple awards of excellence for her sculptural installations at the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show. "If you plucked out the sculpture, the site would lose its power."

By the same token, the sculpture, she says, is crafted specifically for the site. A single piece would not necessarily move easily into any environment; the landscape is an integral part of the art.

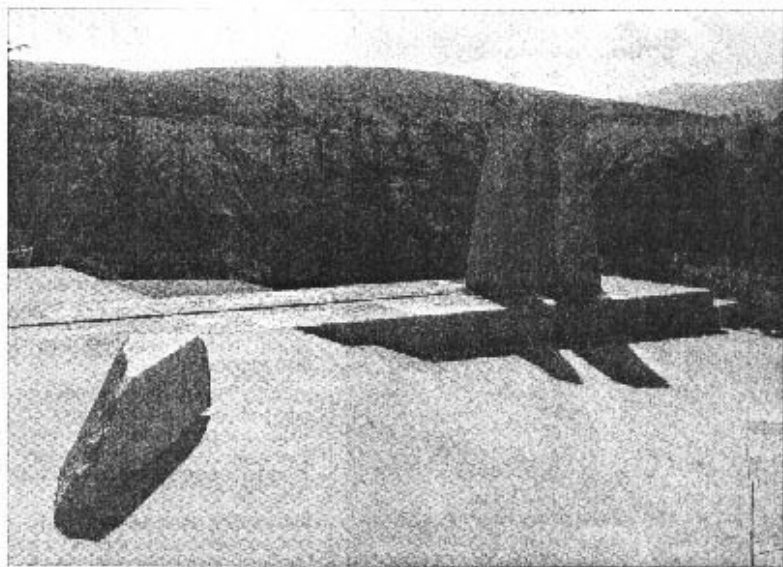
Biaggi's contemporary aesthetic proved to be a perfect match for their home — a single story modern building wrapped around an inner courtyard, with shed roof and cedar siding. The home is filled with modernist treasures such as a Noguchi table and a classic Bertoia Diamond Chair in which Lund rocked her babies nearly half a century ago.

It was designed for simplicity by celebrated San Francisco architect Jim Jennings, whose design philosophy is to conform with the "geometries of the landscape."

Lund, an artist, and Kevil, a Petaluma-based attorney, did not necessarily have an ultra modern landscape in mind when they first settled onto the 60-acre property just east of the historic Marconi Wireless Station in Marshall about five years ago.

"In the beginning, I thought I would just put seed out there," Lund remembers. "But the quail were here in a minute and ate them all. And you couldn't mow next to the windows because stones would kick up and hit the glass."

Then Lund unearthed a business card she had picked up



JEFF KAHN LEE / The Press Democrat

Suzanne Biaggi's sculptural landscapes are specifically designed around her monolithic sculptures, such as the fountain pillar, right, at the Marshall home.

years earlier at the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show. She remembered Biaggi, with her black hair and dark eyes, "kneeling down by these great pillars" at the show.

The artist, who began incorporating sculpture with landscape design 23 years ago, set up her drafting table right on site.

"I would do a drawing on paper and then take oyster shell calcium and draw it on the ground. And then I'd take that and move it around on the ground, go back and measure it, and put it back on paper," she explains of the careful process. "So it was a means of working from the site, to the paper to the site."

But Biaggi also sees each landscape as organic. The design process doesn't end with blueprints and the arrival of the landscape contractor and backhoe.

As an artist, she continues to shape the design throughout the installation process.

"When they start to install it, you can see new opportunities," she says. "If we just pull this back a little bit, or if we just eliminate that step and do this here, it could be so much more interesting. This is pretty much my philosophy with sculpture too — to not get locked in; to be available for opportunities."

What materialized was a series of terraces scored by bluestone pathways and contrasted with sandy TerraPave, an aggregate paving held together with a non-petroleum based emulsion that allows it to retain its natural color.

A trio of concrete benches extend out in a curve marking the edge of the landscape on one side. On the other, the granite water feature stands as a dramatic note against the bay.

Other sculptural features are incorporated — a jagged granite bench and a gnarly Cypress log provide a place to sit and take in the entire estuary and snug Marconi Cove.

Lund said it's surprising how protected this terrace is, considering it's proximity to coast.

"You'd be shocked at how many nights we can sit right out there or on the steps, just enjoying ourselves. It's warm. It's not windy. We just look out at the water, have a martini."

For the signature water feature, Biaggi combed the state for just the right stone, a quest that took her as far as Fresno. She wanted the piece to be white granite and had to be columnar. "I was looking for the shape and the stone that spoke to me — that I would be spending a lot of time with."

Surprisingly, she found a stone she could bond with at Wheeler Zamaroni Stone Fabrication and Landscape Supply in Santa Rosa. They provided the equipment, she studied the stone and directed each cut.

Biaggi and Lund spent hours finding the perfect placement for the piece, not only to fit in harmony with the design, but to have the dual purpose of blocking the headlights of cars coming around the curve on the highway below.

The plantings within the hard palette are spare, confined to agaves and aloes, succulents adapted to survive in extreme climates with minimal care.

"I have a whole (olive) orchard" to tend to, Lund laughs. "I can't be fussing down here."

Lund has all but ceded the rest of her property to the hungry deer, although she has planted some grasses like California festuca in terra cotta pots and hopes to do more cultivation later to the side of the house or within the protected confines of her courtyard.

But she finds a certain serenity in the spare sculptural planes of her back yard.

"It doesn't intrude on the water and the view," she says. "The birds come and take a bath in the fountain. It's just very pensive and peaceful."

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