



San Francisco magazine

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Sleep With the Fishes

Lauren Murrow | Photo: David Livingston | October 9, 2014

A rentable '30s fishing shack gets a design-savvy upgrade.



Peter Englander made the living room chandelier out of vintage glass fishing floats covered in netting. (1 of 5)

"It had a bad homemade, hodgepodge, Cape Cod look," Peter Englander of the Englander Building Company recalls with a shudder, describing his 80-year-old cottage on Tomales Bay. "Think duck knickknacks, a lighthouse lamp, and a cheesy hot tub with a plastic roof out back." Still, the Mill Valley resident bought the 700-square-foot Inverness rental cabin early this year despite its aesthetic shortcomings. "I'd been dreaming of getting a little place in the Point Reyes area for years," he says. "This was what I could afford."

Rather than New England kitsch, Englander envisioned a cozy gentleman's fishing cabin—for his own use and [rentals \(http://seastar-cottage.com\)](http://seastar-cottage.com)—that would reflect the area's nautical history. "It's really important to me that whatever I'm building fits into the context of its surroundings," he says. That meant saving what he could from the original house and faking the rest. A new deck and outdoor shower replaced the dilapidated hot tub solarium. Englander salvaged all the existing light and plumbing fixtures and repurposed lumber from the rotting 100-foot-long wooden walkway into a new bed headboard.

The cottage is meant to feel like a snapshot in time, Englander says, where bird-watching and fire side reading still trump TV. He road-tripped to antique shops in Fairfax, Petaluma, and Healdsburg with that in mind, aimlessly seeking vintage ephemera. "I'd find stuff I liked, then dream up a use for it," he says. As a result, the cabinet hardware is crafted from leather belts, Army trunk straps, and brass boat cleats, while the living room chandelier is made from old Japanese fishing net floats.

Though little actual fishing is done at this faux fisherman shack, January and February, when the herring spawn in Tomales Bay and the sea lions follow, are prime months to visit. "You can sit on the deck and hear the sea lions barking, birds singing, and cows mooing faintly from across the bay," says Englander.

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Email Lauren Murrow at lmurrow@modernluxury.com (<mailto:lmurrow@modernluxury.com>)

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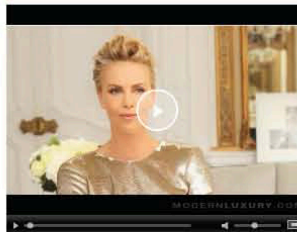
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