



“Once I started my own firm in San Francisco, I found that I deeply enjoyed connecting to the clients we are so lucky to have, along with the skilled builders and consultants who bring it all to life. It’s a team sport.”

— Jeff Zimmerman

Jeff Zimmerman

Zimmerman Miller + Montanari



Growing up as a kid with dyslexia, Jeff Zimmerman often felt like a failure and an outsider—until he discovered drawing.

“In school, my ability to be artistic at an early age gave me a sense of success which I did not often feel as a dyslexic student,” he said. “Teachers encouraged me and directed me toward courses like industrial design and art and I found my footing, and maybe also my soul.”

Zimmerman pursued his passion and graduated from California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo with a bachelor’s degree in architecture in 1979. He also studied abroad at the Ecole d’Art Americain in Fontainbleau, France.

After college, Zimmerman had an auspicious start to his career, landing a job as a project designer with the prestigious Fisher Freidman Associates in San Francisco, one of the leading housing firms in the U.S. He next worked for the Barry Berkus in Santa Barbara. During this time, he was involved in residential and resort projects in Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, and Texas.

These early job experiences inspired Zimmerman to use modern elements in high-density housing and remain true to the simplicity of modernism, while also infusing his work with a sense of fun. He cites Robert Geering at FFA and Barry Berkus as influential mentors.

In 1985 Jeff moved back to San Francisco to open the offices of Columbus Architects, which evolved into Zimmerman and Associates, now Zimmerman, Miller and Montanari, where he serves as founding principal. ZM+M specializes in single-family homes in the Bay Area and Wine Country. Nick Miller and Austin Montanari are his partners at the firm.

“They are through-the-roof talented and technically brilliant,” Zimmerman said. “I often have the first burst of an idea or design concept, but they quickly step up as designers and refine the work. We share a fierce appreciation for clean, high-impact modern design.”

Since launching his firm, Zimmerman has led the planning and design of more than 5,000 dwellings in communities throughout the United States and Canada. He has also taught architecture to fifth graders in San Francisco, as well as lectured at the California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, the California College of Arts and Crafts in San Francisco, and the University of California at Berkeley.







“Architects were always environmentalists, seeking to connect a structure to nature and to make sure the building is in tune with the environment.”

– Jeff Zimmerman







Zimmerman said that early in his career, he worked on high-density housing and always sought to amplify light, air, and privacy in the design process, making the spaces feel personal and unique. He continues that approach today, but with luxury custom homes and at a much more extensive, detailed level.

“We are able to use a broad array of wonderful materials and finishes, emphasize the art of our designs, and capture the personality of each client, which can mean adding some whimsical and unique elements,” he said.

You can see this approach in ZM+M’s many breathtaking homes in Northern California, including a stunning 5,500-square-foot home in Healdsburg. Situated atop a hill, the five-bedroom home boasts expansive views of surrounding vineyards and countryside.

“This client wanted the home to be part of the land and gave us great latitude in the design process,” Zimmerman said. “Russian River Valley to the east, rolling vineyard views to the south, and the Pacific Coast Range to the west – this is Northern California at its best.”

Zimmerman said the clients discovered the property while cycling in the area on vacation. Coming from Manhattan, they wanted a spacious home designed for an indoor/outdoor lifestyle.

“The site provided the perfect setting,” Zimmerman said. “The flat knoll allowed for rooms with large glazing and pocket sliders, opening to the pool deck and it’s amazing views. A wine cave and study sit below the cantilevered bedroom which soars over the Russian River valley.”

The home’s plan shapes itself around an outdoor courtyard with all the social spaces like the family room, kitchen, and living room designed with large openings leading to the patio and a terraced pool and landscape that steps down to a deck off of the wine cellar at the lower level. The material palette is made up of stone, vertical cedar siding, and boardform concrete. The design also features vertical cedar fins that help with solar shading and filter the light as it passes into the interior spaces.

“The real challenge to this site was not to screw it up,” Zimmerman said. “In the end, grab all its beauty and amenities and make it look as if it belonged there.”

Interior Design: Shawback Interiors
Landscape Architecture: Merge Studio, Cary and Amy Bush
Builder/Contractor: Black Oak Builders, Andy Briglio, Shane DeBruin
Structural Design: GFDS Engineers, Ellen Huang
Photographer: Adam Potts

