

# Home

In the striking home of Catharina and Andrew Gerken, a grand piano sits atop the second-story glass floor.

## Let There Be Light

IN A CORONA DEL MAR CONTEMPORARY,  
THE AMBIENCE IS MODERN  
AND OPEN

# TRANSPARENT MOTIVES

A CORONA DEL MAR HOME PUSHES  
THE CONCEPT OF CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE  
TO NEW HEIGHTS – GLASS FLOOR INCLUDED

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For Catharina and Andrew Gerken, the idea of living in a contemporary home with some envelope-pushing design details was more inspiring than intimidating. “I’m from Sweden, where design is often a bit more contemporary and ahead,” Catharina says. “And both of us were especially ready because our last house was traditional.”

When the couple purchased the Evening Canyon property in 2013, they razed its existing structure and hired architect Chris Brandon, homebuilder Andrew Patterson of Patterson Custom Homes and interior designer Paige Hill for the redo. “They ended up being a dream team. Not only did they work amazingly together, they all individually have a kind of talent and personality that made the process so much fun,” Catharina says of the 16-month construction odyssey.





In architect Christopher Brandon's open-plan kitchen, left, a glass door in the breakfast area slides up to create a seamless indoor/outdoor experience. Bar stools from Cantoni face the quartzite kitchen island. The second-story balcony off the living room, above, features weather resistant seating from Room & Board.



The second-floor living room features an oversized sectional from Room & Board, which rests on a geometric rug from Cantoni.

Today the two-story, five-bedroom house is not only home to Andrew, an orthopedic surgeon with Newport Orthopedic Institute; Catharina, a physical therapist; and the oldest of their three children, but also to some ingenious and out-of-the-box design solutions. Like many architects responding to sloped terrain with ocean views, Brandon opted for an inverted floor plan – with the common areas on the top story and some bedrooms, a media room and a sprawling home gym on the ground floor. “We catch a little bit of ocean view from the upstairs,” Catharina says.

Expansive windows in the great room look onto the ocean as well as the treetops. The design even called for a glass wall that retracts up, like a garage door, off the kitchen area. “Installing one of those doors on a second floor was something we had never done before,” says Patterson, who specializes in custom-built homes in Newport Beach. “It required an enormous crane to do it, but the result is fantastic.”



Designer Paige Hill paid special attention to lighting throughout, even in the master bathroom where a dramatic chandelier from Lightopia in Laguna Beach makes a statement.



While the top floor is drenched in sunlight, the architect came up with an innovative solution to tease some of that brightness into the ground floor: He positioned a second-story skylight directly above a section of glass floor in the living room, effectively creating a see-through shaft through which the sunlight can reach the bottom-floor foyer. A grand piano sits atop the second-story glass floor, which makes for a striking design moment without blocking too much light. Further connecting the two levels is a “wine wall” that starts on the foyer floor and climbs up through an opening in the ceiling to continue its climb midway up the second floor wall, next to the piano.

“The wine wall was Paige’s idea,” Catharina says. “In her own home, she designed an amazing shoe wall in the master bedroom. Here she suggested a similar vertical statement, and since we enjoy wine, the idea worked.”

While Hill’s signature glamorous touch is found throughout the home – from high-concept lighting to lots of reflective surfaces – it was Catharina who stood firm on one decidedly traditional design detail: “When it came to the dining room, I really wanted to keep my table from Sweden,” she says. “It’s a replica from the 1700s and completely doesn’t go with this house at all. But I brought it on an airplane from Sweden all of those years ago, and we’ve had so many fun dinners at that table.

“Everyone tried to talk me into throwing it out, but I couldn’t. It doesn’t quite fit in with everything else, but that actually makes me like it even more.” ■



Homeowners Andrew and Catharina Gerken stand on the glass floor area that looks down on the first-floor foyer. The room features a custom wine rack, grand piano and artwork by Jenny Simon. Their Corona del Mar “flipped design” two-story home, built by Patterson Custom Homes, offers ocean views from the common areas. An LED-framed mirror, left, sets the mood in the second-floor powder room.

