

EXPANDED HORIZONS

This ocean-facing Corona del Mar abode unites an eclectic art collection with a serene coastal palette.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHADE DEGGS

Architecture: Christopher Brandon, Brandon Architects
Interior Design: Denise Morrison, Denise Morrison Interiors
Home Builder: Andrew Patterson, Patterson Custom Homes
Landscape Architecture: David Pedersen, David A. Pedersen, Inc., Landscape Architect



Building a from-scratch custom house is the rare opportunity to tick every last box on a proverbial home punch list. Yet, the owners of this contemporary Corona del Mar beach home didn't arrive with dozens of demands.

Instead, they focused on two: Making the most of their enviable Pacific views and showcasing their extensive art collection. The latter drove the project just as much as the former—to the point that designer Denise Morrison's first task was to catalog the duo's collection of sculptures and paintings of varying sizes and styles. Only a few didn't make the cut, mainly because the homeowners kept adding new pieces throughout construction—"and we ran out of room," laughs Morrison. "Art was the key to this project, and something that, from start to finish, we kept in mind as a focal point."

Architect Christopher Brandon agrees, adding of his open, clean-lined design, "We wanted the architecture to allow for all the personality their art and found objects would bring, so the bones of this house are more like a fresh canvas." The resulting architectural envelope became what he considers a soft contemporary dwelling, with a spacious open layout that draws on aspects of the Prairie style through exaggerated horizontal lines and deep eaves. And the home's artful moments extend to sculptural lighting, distinctive furnishings, even a glass elevator with a surprising wallpapered shaft.

The challenge was to keep the house from going too gallery-like—no one wants a beach vacation at a museum, after all—while not leaning too casual, cute or overtly 'beachy' either. To toe this line, Morrison's interiors exude a relaxed elegance. "When you walk in, there's a very cool, faded, vintage kilim rug on the floor that sets the tone as beautiful but comfortable," says the designer. "This house is comfortably sophisticated." She maintained the connection to its seaside surroundings subtly, concentrating on a serene, sandy-hued palette splashed with blue. Brandon's prominent use of hand-chiseled limestone and dark wood beams play nicely off the natural shades, but again, the architect notes, "there's no

expected beach materiality here." That point is further underscored by the thoroughly modern Italian-made custom steel windows and doors and glass railings on the staircases inside and out.

What is "beachy," perhaps, is the house's direct connection with water. A fountain and pool at the entrance wrap around it like a modern-day moat, culminating in a main level infinity pool that spills into the lower level's water wall. There's a practical purpose for this feature, conceived by landscape architect David Pedersen, too: It's raised enough to block out some of the rooflines and the street below, enhancing the sight line out to the ocean and creates a barrier without a railing. So no matter where you're standing outside, the look and sound of water surrounds you. The presence of so much H2O is a unifying feature that creates major 'wow' moments, notes general contractor Andrew Patterson. "When you're sitting in the lower level, it's incredible to have, from above, this sheer wall of water plunging down into a trough behind your head."

That's one of many striking features peppered into the house. For example, there's a glass-fronted wine room and tasting bar that could rival a Napa winery's professional set-up. Steel shelves in the living room allow art to be easily interchanged, while two large custom-commissioned pieces by artist William McLure stun above the dining room table and a leather-wrapped sideboard. Morrison also introduced an array of unexpected elements of what she calls "balanced asymmetry"—like how the kitchen's deliberately off-center range contrasts the offset stone block of the island. And throughout every room, bold pendants, chandeliers and sconces vie for attention. "There's not a boring fixture in the house; each one is a star," says the homeowner. The stairwell's scattered alabaster sconces are a perfect example: Morrison planned the placement before the concrete wall was poured. The result is a glowing multi-floor art installation.

Ultimately, the captivating culmination of the architecture, interiors and artwork not only rivals the stunning ocean views but also trumps them. "Sometimes we find ourselves just wandering around looking at our art and our furnishings," says the homeowner. "We're still in awe of what we've achieved." ■



The owners of this Corona del Mar abode possess a sizable art collection, so designer Denise Morrison kept the pieces top of mind as she refined her concept for the interiors. She conceived a custom pedestal and stone bench by Materials Marketing to anchor the entry—"those pieces give it a real gallery-ish vibe," she notes. The vintage kilim rug is from her own House of Morrison boutique.

Steel shelves in the living room allow the residents to easily swap out artwork as needed—a mix of photography and line art is shown here. Morrison appointed the space with a Bright Chair Company sectional from Thomas Lavin and Thayer Coggin lounge chairs. Rather than weigh things down with a single coffee table, the designer opted for a grouping of smaller Apparatus pieces. The accent chair was a score from 1stdibs.





Above: A BDDW leather-wrapped chest and artwork by William McLure marks the transition between the kitchen, dining and living rooms. Allied Maker pendants cast a glow on the kitchen's waterfall countertop of Cielo quartzite from Mission Tile West, while Ann Sacks backsplash tiles and Sun Valley Bronze pulls sourced from New York Hardware add further dimension. The bar chairs are Baker.

Opposite: "This breakfast nook is really a three-sided glass cube and was placed to maximize the dramatic sight lines there," says architect Christopher Brandon. "It was a key point in the original concept." The Brombal glazing is from Associated Building Supply. Morrison chose a Robert James Collection table, Sossego chairs and an eye-catching, asymmetrical light fixture from The Future Perfect. Underfoot is Warren Christopher flooring.





Understated texture and pattern reign in a guest room, where a covering from Kneedler Fauchère graces the walls, and Solé Shades draperies in a nubby fabric treat the windows. A Nested armchair and an upholstered Lee Industries bench are positioned near the Baker bed. The linens are from the designer's own House of Morrison collection. A Visual Comfort & Co. lamp rests on a Robert James Collection night table.

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