INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE / **DAVID LUCAS, LUCAS**
INTERIOR DESIGN / **SUZIE LUCAS, LUCAS**
HOME BUILDER / **RYAN HILL, HILL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**

# DEFERENTIAL TREATMENT

A RENOVATION YEARS IN THE MAKING
TRANSFORMS A LA JOLLA HOME INTO A MODERN AERIE.

WRITTEN BY **CHRISTINE DEORIO** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AARON LEITZ**

Twenty-five years is a long time to wait for anything, much less the renovation of a home. But that's exactly how many years passed between the time a couple snapped up this abode on a La Jolla bluff and the moment they declared its transformation complete.

Before embarking on an extensive overhaul, the homeowners spent several years taking in the views—which run from Torrey Pines Golf Course to the north to La Jolla Cove to the west—from different rooms at different times of day, pondering how to maximize their singular setting and their floor plan. A series of previous owners' renovations had rendered the latter haphazard, with a master bedroom positioned at the entry and a laundry room located between the foyer and the family room. Eventually, the husband says, "We made it a priority to maximize exposure to the ocean views by reorienting the rooms that we live in the most—the master bedroom and the family room."

A few more years and several minor updates later, the couple finally felt ready to bring their bold vision to life. To realize this, they enlisted the brother-and-sister duo of residential designer David Lucas and designer Suzie Lucas as well as general contractor Ryan Hill, and Claude-Anthony Marengo of Marengo Morton Architects, who served as the project's architect of record. For Hill, his initial task was to retrofit the home's unusual structure of hollow clay blocks—which had been formed and stacked a century ago—from the inside out. "We work on a lot of historically designated projects that are very old," Hill says, "but this was the first time we've seen that system in a residential project."

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With that challenge tackled, the designers and homeowners handed Hill another. Rather than hide the structure's imperfect lines and angles behind moldings and trim, the team went the opposite direction. They envisioned seamless transitions between its expansive new windows and sliding glass doors, Venetian plaster and oak-paneled walls, and terrazzo, wood and limestone floors. "Taking a structure that was built 100 years ago and getting it back in line to the precise level of accuracy that's required by David's work was definitely a significant challenge," Hill says. In the family room, for example, he reports, "the floor was out of level by an inch and a half, the ceiling by an inch and a quarter, and we had to create a three-eighths-inch reveal at the top and bottom of the wood veneer wall panels."

"Achieving those perfect reveals was like a magic trick," says David Lucas, "but those subtle moments in the architecture are very strong. They add so much value to the view without distracting from it." The home's warm yet modern finishes follow suit, from back-painted glass accent walls and lacquered kitchen cabinets that reflect the sea views to striated slabs of titanium travertine—chosen for its resemblance to the site's rocky bluffs—that grace exterior walls, the family room's fireplace and a jewel box of a powder room. "The stone gets woven throughout the house, without feeling like a decorative thing," David Lucas says. "It feels integral to the architecture." As do the home's furnishings—many of which he designed to fit the "quirkiness" of the spaces—which employ textured bronzes, rich leathers, warm wood tones and translucent resins to create a soft, sensual style he calls "romantic modernism."

Developing each room's composition of furnishings and fine art—including works by Deborah Butterfield, Ed Moses and Gary Lang—was an evolution, Suzie Lucas says, "of figuring out how to strip back the noise around you because when you're in the space, you're so drawn to the views that you don't want anything competing with that." In the living room, for example, the palette leans earthier and richer, the imposing bronze fireplace wall providing a grounding element. "Then, as you move out toward the family room," she explains, "things get brighter, and we were inspired by the colors in the cove, from the seaweed to the waves to the hillside."

Which is precisely what the homeowners have always had in mind. "This house doesn't just have a view of the ocean," the husband says. "When you look out these windows, you're close enough to the details and drama of the ocean that you feel a part of it." And now, the house can celebrate that special connection—and all the beauty that's happening right outside.

In the entry of this La Jolla home, residential designer David Lucas introduced the quiet finishes that appear throughout, including the terrazzo flooring, Venetian plaster walls and wood ceilings. A clerestory allows light to spill into the space. Beyond, an outdoor room is protected from the elements by a motorized awning.

The family room's titanium travertine fireplace wall echoes the colors and striations of the ocean bluffs. Designer Suzie Lucas opted for tailored, understated furnishings, such as the custom sectional upholstered in Great Plains fabric, a Gran Repos lounge chair and ottoman, a sculptural wood console by LUMA Design Workshop and a custom rug by Erik Lindström. The large abstract painting is by Ed Moses.

**Above:** On the terrace, a woven Brown Jordan sectional and armchairs and a modern-organic coffee table by Andrianna Shamaris employ subtle textures to invite relaxation. The furnishings' neutral hues allow the sea to take center stage.

**Opposite:** A custom resin-and-bronze coffee table by LUMA Design Workshop anchors the living room and displays a Jessica Drenk sculpture composed of pencils. The Liaigre side chair boasts a vivid C. C. Leathers covering. The custom Lapchi rug is from Driscoll Robbins Fine Carpets in Seattle.

**Above:** A new, raked-plaster wall treatment and sleek wood ceiling crowned by an oculus give the home's existing spiral staircase—which leads down to the lower-level bedrooms and living spaces—"a minimalist sculptural feeling," says residential designer David Lucas.

**Right:** In the living room, the focus is on the fireplace's flame-spray bronze panels fabricated by Mayer Designs. The quartet of custom lounge chairs wears Donghia leather. The painting is by Victor Hugo Zayas.

Thoroughly revamped, the guest room boasts a warm, neutral palette, typified by the Innovations wallcovering. An Apparatus fixture hangs above a floating bedside table, part of the custom headboard, which incorporates patinated metal panels. Draperies in a Rogers & Goffigon solid offer privacy when closed.

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