



OPEN INVITATION

SUBTLE TEXTURES, OUTDOORSY HUES AND OCEAN VIEWS
TYPIFY THE RENOVATION OF A LAGUNA BEACH COTTAGE.

WRITTEN BY LIZ ARNOLD / PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHAD MELLON



ARCHITECTURE / DAVE FRITH, BEACH BUS STUDIOS
INTERIOR DESIGN / TANIA CASSILL, HJIT DESIGN
HOME BUILDER / RON MARTZ, RON MARTZ CONSTRUCTION

It was supposed to be just a kitchen remodel. The owners envisioned new cabinets and counters for the Laguna Beach cottage they had purchased 20 years ago and where they were now raising teenage daughters. Then, they showed the work-in-progress to Dave Frith. "Never invite your architect friend over in the midst of a renovation to ask their opinion," says Frith, the architect friend in question. His visit led to a ground-up renovation that opened the entire one-story residence to the outdoors and made the home's rather small footprint feel larger than it is. Designer Tania Cassill was brought on for the beach-chic interiors, and the result is a voluminous, flowing kitchen-dining-living space with views of the pool and ocean beyond.

During the design process, Frith, Cassill and the wife met weekly to review ideas. Their client, the architect says, "had strong opinions on colors, finishes and materials, which made it easier to guide the project." That the residents had also lived in the house for a while helped when devising a new scheme. "They really knew how it worked and how they used it," he recalls. For example, the family is active; the teen girls are very involved with sports, so schedules are busy, and mealtimes are fast and flexible. Removing the kitchen's structural wall allowed for an island—a logical solution for casual dining. Measuring 11 feet, it also delineates space in the adjacent, now-open plan great room. To capture previously untapped views of the ocean, a set of stacking glass doors open up to the pool, the ipe and brick deck and landscaping by Zucker

Design Associates. Frith also removed the attic and raised the ceiling up to the existing roof, adding volume.

Working with general contractor Ron Martz, Frith made a number of other architectural changes, starting at the entry. The front door, now a Dutch-style number with an oxe-eye window above, was moved to the street side of the house rather than languishing off a long outdoor breezeway. Enclosing the space allowed for a new entry hall inside that functions as a gallery for the couple's art collection. The architect also relocated an existing powder room, which in turn freed up space for a larger master bathroom and a walk-in closet.

The couple tasked Cassill with the interiors after hearing her name through friends and seeing her work in a magazine. Besides handling the furnishings, the designer worked closely with Frith on the architectural details to ensure they create a spacious feel. She designed kitchen cabinetry in a smoky shade of white oak that stretches nearly to the white-painted ceiling. The effect, she says, draws the eye up and keeps everything open.

With the new openness came a desire for lightness. "A lot of their existing furniture was too heavy, so we streamlined things and created a more sophisticated California-casual look," Cassill reports. In the living area, that translates to the colors represented outside. Shades of sand, sky and water appear in the white oak coffee table, leather club chairs, nubby upholstery and a hemp rug. A subtle palette also sets the focus squarely on the couple's extensive collection of colorful art. "They purchased pieces that appealed to them and evoked an emotion," shares the designer, who points to one of their newest finds, a Charlotte Culot piece that hangs behind the dining table.

The interiors aren't all about textures and neutrals, though. Unexpected touches abound. On the kitchen island, there is cement tile with a hand-drawn line motif, and the brass interiors of the pendant fixtures above have a subtle glamour. In the master bathroom, a starburst pattern animates the tile floor. Cassill got a little more playful in the master bedroom with a mix of patterns and textures in blues and whites. She covered the walls with indigo grass cloth, treated the windows with striped Roman shades, and dressed the bed in vivid blue print.

About two years after the team began, the renovation was complete, and the beach cottage was finished with updated flat-panel siding, a copper standing-seam roof and, to preserve the cozy feel, new windows and doors in a more traditional style. "Everything has been elevated," says Cassill. "The stacking doors are almost always open to the outdoors, the surfaces are so pretty, the kids love the den, and their bedrooms and bathrooms are so much nicer. They use everything just as we designed it." ■

“WE STREAMLINED
THINGS AND
CREATED A MORE
SOPHISTICATED
CALIFORNIA-
CASUAL LOOK.”

—TANIA CASSILL



In the great room of a Laguna Beach cottage, designer Tania Cassill unified the dining and living areas with neutrals of various textures. For comfortable seating, she placed a low-profile Croft House sofa. She paired a French farm table by Chabca and dining chairs from Design Within Reach with an Allied Maker light fixture. The artwork is by Charlotte Culot.



A Royal System shelving unit from Design Within Reach anchors the den. The mid-century lounge chair is from Hut, Cassill's own shop. She continued the earthy palette in the space, weaving in an RH sofa and a Room & Board coffee table. A vintage Moroccan rug from One Kings Lane brings contrast.

“THE CLIENT HAD STRONG OPINIONS ON COLORS, FINISHES AND MATERIALS, WHICH MADE IT EASIER TO GUIDE THE PROJECT.”

—DAVE FRITH



Above: Quartzite from Marmol Export USA tops the kitchen counters. Allied Maker pendants with metallic interiors inject a glam note into the restrained palette. The Thermador cooktop and ovens are from Pech, the Julien sink is from B&C Custom Hardware and Bath. The artwork is by William DeBlizan.

Opposite: The kitchen's cabinetry by Ross Woodworks features a custom stain. Underfoot is flooring from Warren Christopher. McGuire counter stools pull up to an island faced with tile by Communo for Exquisite Surfaces. The KWC faucet is from B&C Custom Hardware and Bath, the Sub-Zero refrigerator is from Pech.



Blue predominates in the master bedroom where the walls are covered in a grass cloth and John Robshaw for Duraleo fabrics make up the duvet and shams. Ross Woodworks crafted the custom walnut nightstand. The upholstered bed and swing arm sconce are both by RH.

Below, left: Architect Dave Frith reconfigured the master bath to increase usable space. Mosaic tile flooring from Mission Tile West in a starburst pattern jazzes up the room. Marmol Export USA supplied the stone on the shower surround.

Below, right: A mosaic tile backsplash from Mission Tile West, a vanity by Hart Concrete Design with an integrated sink and a Samuel Heath faucet from B&C Custom Hardware and Bath make statements in a powder room. The sconces are by The Urban Electric Co.

