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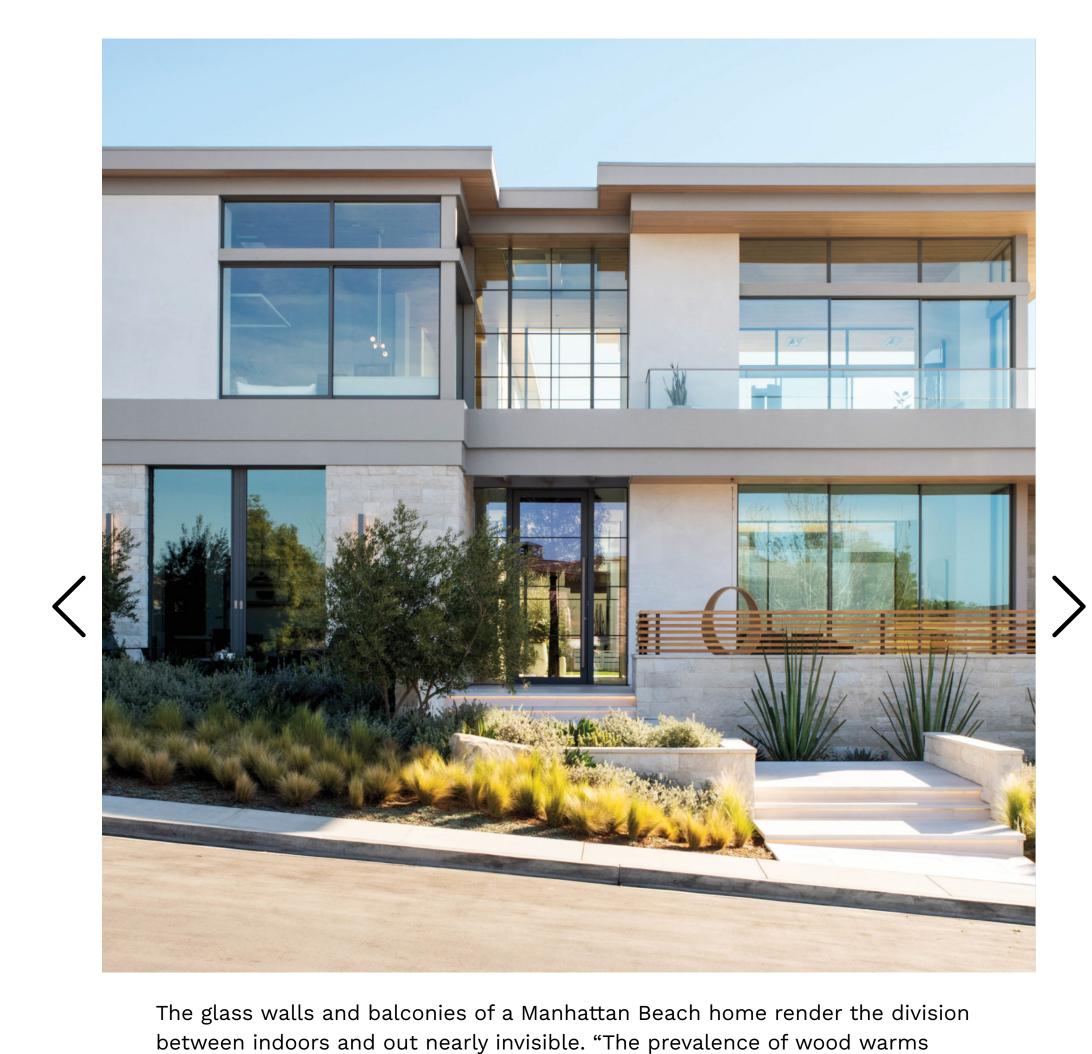
## ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

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## A Manhattan Beach Residence Is Designed Around A Tree

BY KELLY PHILLIPS BADAL / NOVEMBER 21, 2020



everything up, and to me, gives the home more of a Pacific Northwest contemporary vibe," says AnthonyLaney, the residence's architect. Homeowner Peir Serota, who worked with Laney on the interiors, added a swing by Iwona Kosicka as whimsical, functional art.

## Photography:

**HOUSE DETAILS** 

Lauren Pressey

Architecture:
Anthony Laney, Laney LA

Anthony Laney, **Laney LA**, and Peir Serota, **Humble** 

**Home & Decor** 

**Interior Design:** 

**Home Builder:**Robert Crockett, **Jeff** 

**Wilson Construction** 



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scratch for her husband, Jeff, and two children in Manhattan Beach, she immediately handed the worn clipping to architect Anthony Laney. "I told him, 'If it can be done, you're going to design something around a tree—that's a priority,' "Serota recalls with a laugh.

Laney, the adventurous principal of a fast-growing Hermosa Beach firm, takes an all-encompassing view of his projects, handling not just the architecture but often the interiors and landscaping. He fulfilled Serota's

t all started with a tree. The graceful live specimen silhouetted

with her. Presented with the chance of building a house from

within a Japanese home Peir Serota spotted in a magazine stuck

wish, placing a 16-foot Australian brachychiton tree—now fondly nicknamed "Brachy"—smack-dab in the middle of the atrium-style entry. It engages visitors the instant they step inside and causes comic double takes from passersby outside too. While undeniably visually arresting, it's also an organizing element of the home's layout, providing context for the central double-height space and acting as the pivot point for the primary living areas. And it's only the first in a series of bold choices that Laney and Serota undertook to create this striking contemporary home.

A former art educator and trained ceramicist with a keen interest in design and architecture, Serota dove into the design process with unusual intensity. She enrolled in an interior design course at Otis College of Art and Design to prepare, and ultimately launched her own

interior design firm. "We searched for seven years for the right home,

and I consider this my biggest life's work besides raising my children,"

thought it was important to be educated and not go into it blindly." As a

she says. "I wanted it to be an expression of us, not anyone else. I

result, she and Laney shared a creative partnership that transcended typical client-architect relationships, and she developed a tight friendship with Robert Crockett, who served as the general contractor's project manager. "We were the architects in every sense, but Peir—this incredibly engaged, well-traveled, design-schooled artist—was the primary driver of the palette and interior design, plus sourced and purchased all the materials," says Laney. "This home turned out the way it did because of her vision and exceptionally good taste."

Opting for a reverse floor plan for the structure—poised in the coveted Hill Section of Manhattan Beach—the team positioned the main living spaces upstairs to take advantage of the lot's sight lines out to the Pacific. To Serota, this seemed like common sense: Why waste great

second-story views on bedrooms primarily used to sleep? A similar

principle came into play with the sheer number of glass walls, windows,

doors and skylights used: Why take anything less than full advantage of

SoCal's abundant natural light? "We always held the conviction that the

home deserved a soaring roof with deep cantilevers as well as a lot of natural light. The pocketing walls were the minor supporting element that helped us accomplish this," Laney explains.

The roof commands attention in itself. Dramatically cantilevered eaves and oversize decks ring the upper level, with fully retractable doors extending the social spaces seamlessly outdoors—a key component of Serota's desire to welcome in light and air. On the ground floor, the secondary living room's floor-to-ceiling glass doors pull a similar disappearing act, creating an unimpeded flow to a central courtyard entertaining space, sports court and pool. Laney labored to make every inch count with custom furnishings, shelving sized to display curios from

the family's travels and even a fully kitted out ceramics studio.

Meticulously selected materials in a subtle, sophisticated yet earthy

palette of bone, clay, linen, oatmeal and mushroom unite the home's

various elements and speak to Serota's affinity for Belgian designer Axel

Vervoordt's minimalist aesthetic and visual romanticism. "The simplicity

of a minimalist design is peaceful and helps me stay centered," she says. Under her eye, repeated use of Bulgarian limestone, bleached hemlock, and white-oak floors nod to the variant tones found in the pottery she makes. "Peir was very disciplined about allowing the same material to be used in multiple places in different ways so that the whole space seems like it's carved from one mold," says Laney. "The effect is tranquil, calming and harmonious, without going too muted or monochrome." Adds Serota, "The intention in the design of our home was for it to be eternally contemporary, which is very Vervoordt. I want it to be relevant today, in 10 years, in 20 years. I think we achieved that."











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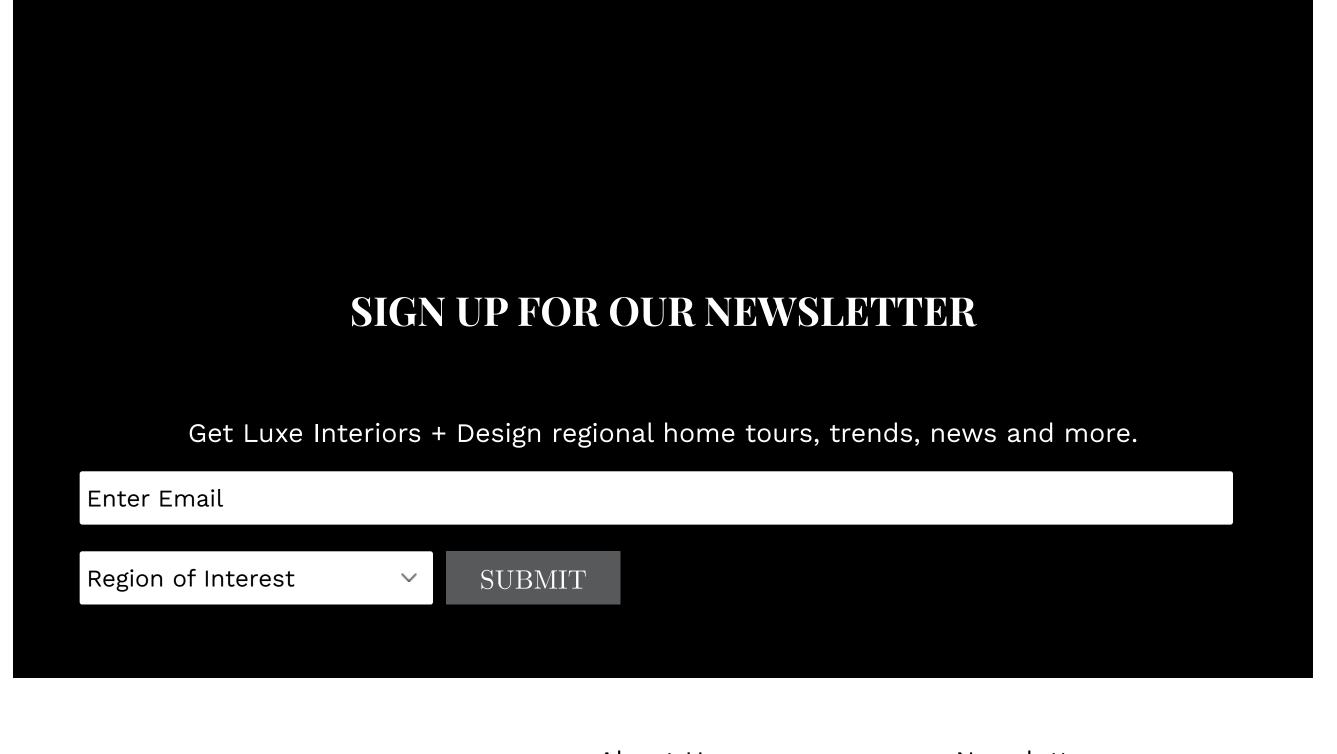
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