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HOME

small lot,

The Stroyke Family

big vision

MODERN MAGIC IN MANHATTAN BEACH

by Lynn Morgan

Photography by Erhard Pfeiffer

It was a challenge to build a spacious family home on a slender 30' by 90' lot. KAA Design Associates rose to the occasion, completing this urbane beach home in 2006.

"All lots in Manhattan Beach are small," says Patti Baker, the senior project manager. "In order to compensate, you have to create indoor/outdoor spaces with balconies and terraces because you don't have a lot of backyard space." ▶





The top floor living room offers gorgeous views of the ocean, only steps away from the property.



Situated on a walk street, steps from the sand, the house is a surprising combination of high Modernism and casual chic, its clean simple lines suggesting the sophistication of an urban townhouse, transported to a beachside setting.

"It's very *urban*," Patti observes. "It feels as if it's in a much bigger city."

The house is designed on three levels, each becoming successively more transparent, an inverted floor plan that is typical of this beach city. The lower level is clad in stone and travertine, offering a solid foundation for the rest of the design. The bedrooms are nestled on the second floor and sheltered in the middle. The top floor, where the living and entertaining spaces are located, is airy and open, with glass doors that vanish completely and a skylight that brings the sunshine and moonlight indoors. The copper roof will develop a rich patina from the sun and damp, salty air.

"This was one of our first opportunities to open up the entire top level of a house," explains Patti. "Our clients, Bryn and Colleen Stroyke, completely embraced the idea, and we put all the communal living spaces on the upper level to give them privacy and take advantage of the views."

Because of the lot size, the KAA Design Group and Jeff Wilson of Wilson Construction, the South Bay-based general contractor, faced some severe design restrictions. "We had very tight height limits," Patti recalls. "We couldn't pitch the roof too much."

The house faces a popular pedestrian walk street leading to the beach and it engages with the neighborhood and community head-on. The walk street garden features an outdoor fireplace and seating on its ipe wood deck. The plantings were inspired by Balinese gardens, "tweaked" with plants native to coastal California, and



The outdoor/indoor room features a spa cleverly concealed as a daybed.



lit at night by Balinese lanterns. "Bryn Stryke grew up in this area," Patti explains. "He loves this community and feels very much a part of it. He can sit in the walk street garden in front of his house and see all his friends walking by on their way to the beach."

The Strykes brought a collection of exotic artifacts, collected over a lifetime of passionate travel to far-flung locales and a love of Indonesian design to the project. Patti and the rest of the KAA Design Group, which also handled the interior design, incorporated these elements into their vision. "They had some pieces of antique teak furniture they wanted us to use, and some African drums and side tables, some tapestries they had collected, and Tibetan ceremonial garb, even the mounted head of a kudu antelope," Patti recalls. "There's a fascinating interplay between the Modernist design and the traditional, Indonesian influences throughout the house."

A fireplace grounds each end of the top level. In between them, KAA





The kitchen incorporates teak cabinetry to match the teak floors throughout.



The master bedroom



installed a beamed ceiling, illuminated from below by cove lighting, integrated into the drapery track. It creates a lantern effect when viewed from the outside. "We put a lot of thought into our lighting plans," says Patti. "It's a vital part of the overall design of a space." KAA worked with Dave McCarroll of Kaplan Gehrig McCarroll Lighting of Santa Monica to create the dramatic lighting plot for the house.

The interior design arm of KAA Design Group created an "uncluttered" interior for this sleek beach house. The overall palette is muted: natural, neutral, with occasional splashes of bright color. They installed sisal rugs and linen draperies, paired with gauzy sheers, allowing rich texture, rather than color, to create the visual excitement.

The Stroykes wanted teak floors – more of the Balinese influence – and



A garden-style patio opens to the walkway street.



KAA paired them with matching teak cabinetry. The entry stairs are made of ipe wood, a sustainable, exotic hardwood. It seems to "float" away from a pale blue wall of Venetian plaster that is softly lit by the skylight above.

The top level also features an outdoor room with an artfully camouflaged spa. "It's covered," Patti explains. "It looks like a daybed. When you're not soaking in it, it becomes extra seating." The openness of the top floor creates an illusion of both space and privacy in a compact lot. "They have a view of the pier and white water. You can watch the dolphins and the surfers from the house," she notes.

Patti is pleased with the completed project and the way the KAA Design Group solved the dilemma of building a five-bedroom house in such a restricted space. The solution was almost like writing a haiku. "There is no over-indulgence to the design," she says. "Every inch counts." ●

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