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A BALINESE-INSPIRED WALKSTREET GEM

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MODERN MAGIC IN MANHATTAN BEACH

by Lynn Morgan

Photography by Erhard Pfeiffer

t 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."







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."

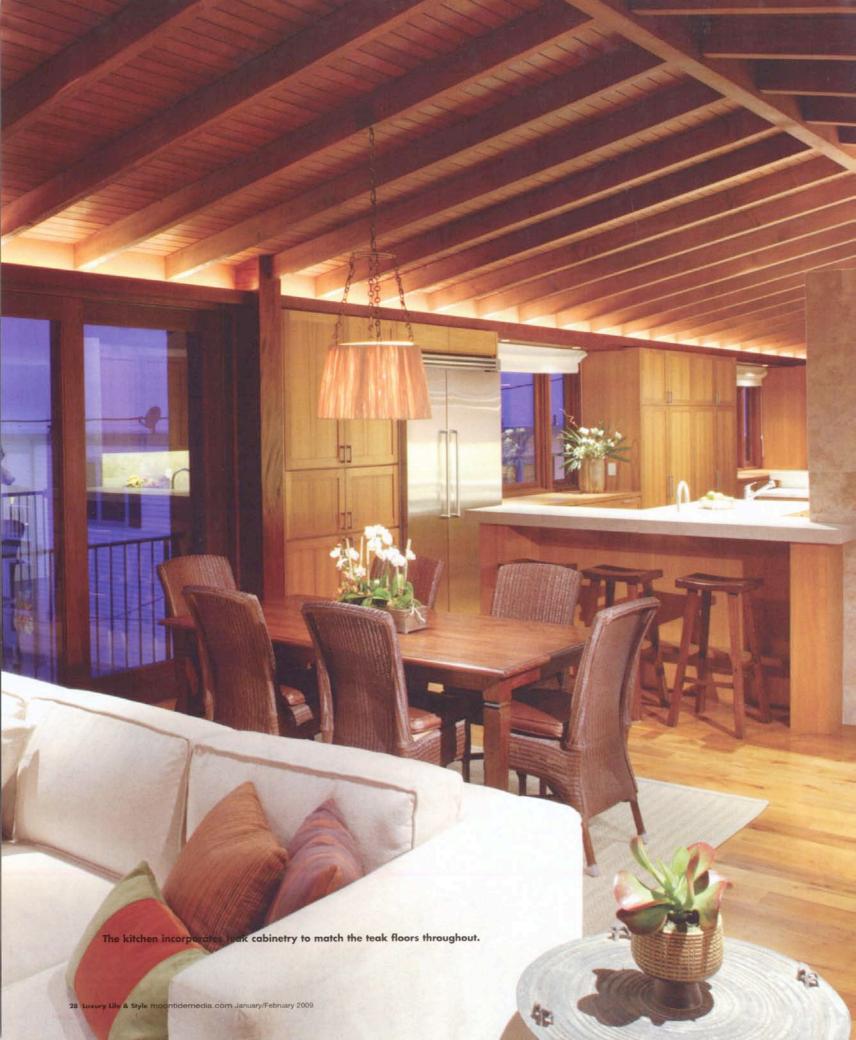
Because of the lot size, the KAA Design Group and Jeff Wilson of Wilson Construction, the South Bay-based general contractor, faced some severe design restrictions. "We had very tight height limits," Patti recalls. "We couldn't pitch the roof too much."

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

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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 out-door 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."

COLLABORATORS:

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