

The dining room floats out from the top floor of the house. Windows on three sides of the room feature mahogany-clad frames.

A LAGUNA BEACH
CONTEMPORARY GOES
BEYOND ITS BACHELOR
PAD INSPIRATION

LONG VIEW



BY ALEXANDRIA ABRAMIAN :: PHOTOGRAPHY BY JERI KOEGEL



Good things come to those who wait could be the mantra of this Laguna Beach home. When the property was purchased in 2007, the owner tapped local firm Studio 6 Architects to create a contemporary yet warm retreat on a seriously sloped lot with stunning ocean views.

Simple enough. Yet it took almost five years to complete the 4,150-square-foot home on the 10,000-square-foot lot. Today, the finished home is a testament to hard work, patience and endless design/review meetings. "If this was a vacant lot instead of this house when we had originally purchased it, we couldn't have been able to build this," says Robert Williams, partner and principal of Studio 6, along with Brian Muehlbauer. "But since there was already a house there, they grandfathered us in to all the variances." Add to that the fact that the client is part of an Orange County construction family, that has been in business for more than 100 years, and you'd be hard-pressed to find a more exacting owner.

Today, however, the striking home stands out as the exception to the rule in Orange County architecture: It is contemporary, as evidenced by its abundant right angles, lack of ornamentation and creative interplay of stone and wood, glass and copper. But unlike countless other modern homes in the area, this one weaves those minimalist gestures into a home that feels warm and inviting, not cold and gallery-like.

"The owner is young and was a bachelor when we started the design process," says Muehlbauer. "And although he wanted something that would feel contemporary, he didn't want it to be cold. The way you feel when you



ABOVE Stunning views from the master bathroom. **BELOW** The downstairs great room features a media area and a custom-built wet bar made of stained alder wood.



Dividing the living room and home office is a floor-to-ceiling fireplace. Hidden doors on either side of the hearth allow the office to be converted into a private room. Interior design by Lisa Henry of Henry West Interior Designs.





The master bedroom is located on the top floor of the house, the better to take advantage of its five-star ocean views. BELOW A sprawling, limestone-floored deck cantilevers over the hillside. Tempered glass panels keep the views uninterrupted.



see all those white and gray homes.” The key turned out to be an abundant use of natural materials – ipe wood, groutless ledge stone, raw copper that naturally patinas – used in striking ways to create an overall impression of soulful simplicity.

The open-plan, two-story home also honors that singular Southern California contribution to modern architecture: The seamless indoor/outdoor experience. With disappearing pocket doors and flooring that extends inside and out, the interiors of the home effortlessly extend to its many decks, outdoor walkways and water features. Landscape design by Daniel Stewart & Associates uses sculptural succulents and bamboos, and concrete walkways that are lined with greenery.

Inside, the top floor’s living and dining areas, as well as its great room, all flow easily into one another. The master bedroom is also upstairs to take advantage of the five-star views, while downstairs, there’s another family room, as well as a media room, game room and gym.

“Very little is compartmentalized here. Nothing is enclosed, and that allows entertaining that can be intimate or can easily accommodate up to 100, which is what the client wanted,” says Muehlbauer, who adds, “It’s also very much about daily function for family use where everyone can be involved in the cooking and cleaning. Watching TV or a game or doing homework is all done in an environment that’s about connection, not isolation.”

Homework? Yes, the man who once envisioned the ultimate bachelor pad is now happily married.

Waiting has its upside.



The two-story “upside down” house has common areas on the top floor, along with the master bedroom. The other bedrooms are on the bottom level. **BELOW** Indoor/outdoor integration was key to the entire design. From the living room, pocket windows disappear to reveal a water feature that is also a spa.

