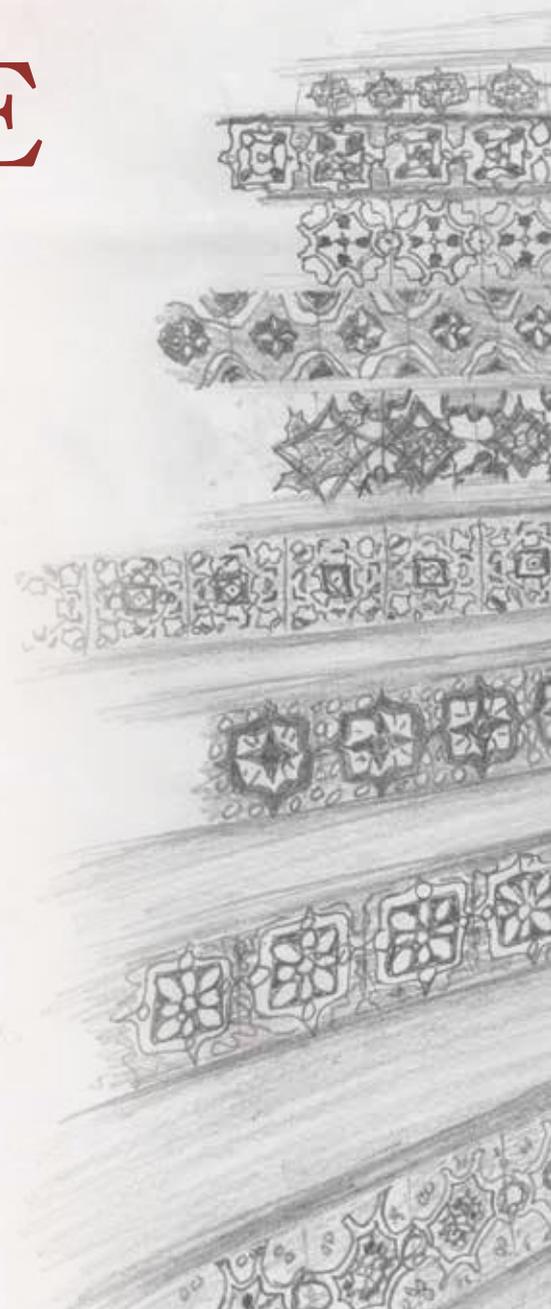


Style & SUBSTANCE

AUTHENTICITY AND
ATTENTION TO DETAIL
BRING A FRESH APPROACH
TO BEACH LIVING.

WRITTEN BY SUZANNA CULLEN HAMILTON

PHOTOGRAPHED BY GREY CRAWFORD AND SIRI BERTING





"WE **WANTED A SPACE** WHERE WE COULD SIT AND TALK WHILE DANA COOKS WHEN WE'RE **ENTERTAINING** BUT NOT ACTUALLY BE IN THE KITCHEN. THIS FLOOR PLAN GIVES US A **DESIGNATED DINING AREA**, FAMILY ROOM, LIBRARY AND PORCH—**ALL ON THE TOP FLOOR.**"







Inspired by Spanish colonial revival architecture, Dana and Michael Leyland created an authentic home on a Manhattan Beach walk street. From the architectural planning to the construction to the interior design and landscaping, the house is a rarity in the South Bay due to the equal attention given to all facets in creating the home.

Though not an architectural style frequently seen in the Beach Cities, Spanish colonial revival architecture is perfectly suited to an ocean-oriented climate. Bright white stucco walls, arches and fountains provide relief from the sun, while colorful tiles and wood beams echo the palate of the natural environment.

Working with architect Louie Tomaro and builder Dave Baldwin, Michael and Dana spent three years creating and building the home. "I purchased the original 1948 beach cottage many years ago, but after Dana and I married, we decided to tear it down and build the home of our dreams," says Michael.

The stark white stucco exterior with hand-painted tiled stairs leading to the massive wood front door sets the Spanish colonial tone of the house. An octagonal-shaped, tile-inlaid foyer floor with a wrought iron dragon chandelier greets visitors, while sweeping curved staircases with more hand-painted tiles connect the three-storied home both literally and decoratively.

A water feature in an interior courtyard is a common feature of Spanish colonial revival architecture, and it creates a special focal point in the Leyland home. Situated on the top floor of the main living area, a small fountain sends cascades of water rippling over the richly colored plants that surround it. From the moment one stands inside the tiled interior and hears the water, it is evident that this is a carefully considered home.

Like most beachside houses in the South Bay, the living area is on the top floor of the house to take advantage of ocean breezes and views. However, the Leyland home elevates the ubiquitous open-concept top floor plan—where typically all of the dirty dishes, television and toys are visible in one big room—to a far more sophisticated plan.

Because the lot was sloped, it was a natural progression to install a step between each area, thereby creating designated spaces yet retaining the open floor plan. This combination of ingenuity and building practicality resulted in a far more civilized floor plan.

"We wanted a space where we could sit and talk while Dana cooks when we're entertaining but not actually be in the kitchen," says Michael. "This floor plan gives us a designated dining area, family room, library and porch—all on the top floor."

Dana holds a degree in horticulture, and her passions include cultivating new plants, cooking and wine. A goal of the architecture was to successfully incorporate areas throughout the house to accommodate all of these interests.

Multiple porches provide an opportunity for different types of plants that need various environments of sun and shade. The top floor balcony provides an area where home-cultivated herbs are just steps away from the chef's kitchen, while porches on each of the lower floors provide space for flowers.

Designer Phil Norman worked with Dana and Michael to create interiors that are as layered and complete as the house itself. The rooms are methodically designed to be highly functional, comfortable and authentic to the architectural style.

Oriental rugs, kilims, ikat fabrics, heavyweight linens, warm woods and a soft palate of muted colors meld throughout the house, lending a feeling of validity and purpose. "We wanted a warm, cozy feeling instead of a house that was simply furnished and staged," says Dana. All of the rooms relate, but there are subtle differences that convey a high level of attention to detail.

Meticulous attention to elements such as coffered ceilings, herringbone tile, river rock and copper have been carefully considered and incorporated into each space. In total, the interior finishes convey as much significance as the architecture so that the entire presentation of the house is one of significance.

"Phil made this process seamless for us, because even though we had selected everything, when we walked in for the first time it was superb. Even the beds were made," says Dana.

The impact of that first visit to their home was galvanizing for them. "It was perfect from the first moment we entered," says Michael.

Accommodating Dana's requests for a chef's kitchen and places for her plantings was an easy task compared to Michael's one request in the Spanish colonial style house: an Irish pub. After much deliberation and design iterations, the space started to finally come together.

"I wanted an Irish pub, but now I have an Irish cantina," laughs Michael. Herringbone fabrics and Scottish plaids cover the furnishings, while a sweeping bar, wine cellar and fireplace add architectural weight to the space.

Exiting the house, there is one painting that, while not Spanish colonial, is immediately recognizable. The Lone Cypress at Pebble Beach anchors one stark white wall. "It's where Michael proposed," says Dana.

From the site of an original beach home to a significantly constructed new home to the famed tree in Northern California, the Leyland home is one of substance and historical reference.





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[THE COLLABORATORS]

LOUIE TOMARO, ARCHITECT | DAVID BALDWIN, BUILDER | PHIL NORMAN, DESIGNER