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OCEAN HOME

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CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

ON THE COVER
Landscape designer Scott Shrader works with the natural beauty of Rincon Point to create a serene outdoor living space.

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ROOM AT THE TOP

A BEACH-LOVING FAMILY CELEBRATES THEIR SOUTH AFRICAN ROOTS WITH ORGANIC, AERIE-STYLE LIVING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

BY JANICE RANDALL ROHLF

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROGER DAVIES

THE HISTORY OF SURFING
LUXURY HOTELS

Architect Grant Kirkpatrick brings film director Warren Kushner's South African homeland into the design of his Southern Californian home. Kirkpatrick seamlessly blends interiors and exteriors.

As the aquamarine Pacific curls and crests behind him, 12-year-old Kai Kushner narrates a YouTube video about his life. "I spend more time in the ocean than I do on dry land," he says. Towheaded and tan (his name means "ocean" in Hawaiian), the young Californian (now 15) has surfed in Hawaii, South Africa, Fiji, Australia, Mexico and the Maldives, to name just a few places, often accompanied by his parents and two younger sisters. Such a peripatetic adventure might sound unusual for children this age until you learn that their father, commercial and film director Warren Kushner, was a member of the South African surf team in the 1990s and still competes at home as a member of the South Bay Boardriders Club.

A passion for surfing is just one aspect of the family's very deliberate, outdoors-focused regimen. "They eat, drink, and sleep an active and healthy lifestyle," says architect Grant Kirkpatrick, noting that the family's stash of nearly three dozen different surfboards in a special garage is growing faster than, and threatening to intrude upon, an adjacent wine cellar.

When Kirkpatrick, founding partner of KAA Design in Los Angeles, and Warren

The interiors offer a laid-back beach vibe combined with all the sophisticated details of luxury homes.

first met, the latter's dream was for a home near the beach on a property big enough to afford his nature-loving family just as much living space outdoors as indoors—feasible since the area's idyllic year-round temperatures hover in the high 60s and low 70s. Once a double lot on a walk street was secured, the design for the home came together in a way that not only respected the family's casual lifestyle and South African roots but also turned architectural convention upside down. Literally.

With its inverted floorplan, all of the home's most important living spaces are at the top, in part to have an unobstructed view out to the ocean, but mainly to allow easy, open-air penthouse living. In a seamless melding of indoors and outdoors, all the spaces flow thanks to floor-to-ceiling windows that are actually retractable doors, almost always left open. What one would typically find on the ground—a 5-foot-deep swimming pool and spa, gardens, outdoor dining room with barbeque—is perched three stories up in the air, atop lower floors with bedrooms, a guest suite and a kitchen. An outdoor shower and staircase see a lot of use as family and guests zip from the beach to the pool without stepping foot inside.

Addressing the exquisitely raw wood-and-stone palette of the house, Kirkpatrick shares, "We wanted to infuse the architecture with lots of texture and with natural materials left to evolve organically." Pains were taken to ensure that as they lived here at the beach in Southern California, the family still felt the influence and the indigenous nature of South Africa. Even the top-level grass is real. Kirkpatrick's proposal to use high-quality artificial turf was summarily dismissed by Warren, who has happy memories of his father chewing on tender blades of grass plucked from their lawn.

Other than the kitchen island with stools, there is no indoor dining area. For outdoor cooking (and heat in chilly weather), a "braai," the South African version of a barbeque that's akin to a wood-fired pizza oven, sits beneath a trellis supported by the trunks of Eucalyptus trees, which have been left natural, hollowed out and filled with steel for heft. In fact, the entire top floor ceiling is crafted from eucalyptus reeds. These and screens of stripped bamboo shafts elsewhere in the house filter sunlight in such a way as to create beautiful patterns on the home's limestone walls, standing in for traditional hanging artwork.

The open floor plans of South African safari lodges were the inspiration for an airy master suite on the top level, connected to the main living and entertaining area by a bridge. Such an exposed layout of bedroom, bathroom and closet is not for everyone (only the toilet is compartmentalized), but for his clients, says the architect, "It's a testimony to the low-key way they live.

"We tried to translate earthy and organic into the neighborhood and the urban beach lifestyle that's here," sums up Kirkpatrick. "Warren's original vision of grass, water, indoor-outdoor flow, and top-level living was really fun for us [to bring into being] because it was a different charge from what we're used to." ✦

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This home is an apotheosis of sophisticated design in a coveted oceanfront Manhattan Beach location.

High Art

With some of the best ocean views on The Strand, this SoCal home harmoniously melds sophisticated architecture and Scandinavian restraint.

BY JANICE RANDALL ROHLF // PHOTOGRAGHS BY MANOLO LANGIS

To compensate for the narrow, rectangular lots they're usually set on, the Manhattan Beach homes that architect Grant Kirkpatrick designs are always at least three stories—high enough to glimpse the ocean over the roofs and around the corners of neighboring abodes. Lofty too are the goals he lays out for his Los Angeles firm, KAA Design. "We want to set a new bar for the West Coast—a benchmark for global perspective in a coastal context."

A case in point, this home is an apotheosis of sophisticated design in a coveted oceanfront location. Rising from the westernmost reach of a tightly built residential enclave, it sits directly on a portion of The Strand, a 21-mile long bike path running along the beach. Glorious panoramas of the ocean and pier abound from its middle and top levels.

Responding organically to its surroundings, the house—two pavilions connected by a courtyard—is subtly reminiscent of a sea-going vessel perched on waves of seagrass. The board-formed concrete bases bring to mind bulkheads and piers, while Alaskan yellow cedar, commonly used in boatbuilding, was chosen for its ability to withstand the elements as well as for the classic way it weathers.

"Exposing the actual structure of the building is one element that gives it its timelessness," notes Kirkpatrick, referring to the floor joists that go from one beam to another and two feet apart. Beautifully crafted, they have an unconcealed strip of steel inside for fortification that also gives each joist an aesthetically interesting stripe down the middle. Albertini doors, windows and other structural details feature bronze from Italy, which acquires an attractive patina over time. White shiplap siding on the pavilions offers a bulwark-like counterpoint to the other textures and rounds out the exterior palette.

"We mine what is unique about both the property and the client," says Kirkpatrick, a longtime champion of contemporary architecture that celebrates an indoor-outdoor lifestyle. "Marrying the two things starts to generate ideas." The homeowner has Swedish roots and, coincidentally, so

Simplicity, a connection with nature, timelessness and coziness are the hallmarks of the Scandinavian style introduced within the beach design.

does the interior designer, Santa Monica-based Tim Clarke, who collaborates frequently with Kirkpatrick. Hallmarks of Scandinavian style—simplicity, a connection with nature, timelessness and coziness—steered design decisions like using natural wood, concrete and expansive windows, as did the lifestyle of the clients.

The well-traveled family, which includes children at schools in different parts of the world, wanted this to be where they would all come to be together. The idea of a sanctuary—a place that supports your spirit as well as your body—was ever-present during the design process, notes Clarke, who brought his signature coastal aesthetic to the project. While the main common room is a courtyard-connected gathering space where the family catches up with each other, entertains, eats and just hangs out, the lower level is where they rejuvenate. Here, in their own wellness center, surrounded by aromatic cedar and lots of greenery, they enjoy a full-size lap pool (the wife's special request), a hot tub, a sauna and a workout area.

Invitingly sequestered, the spa's only natural illumination comes from a skylight at one end where floating spiral stairs lead to the bright and open core living areas of the house, all in

The home boasts its own wellness center complete with lap pool and spa.

the pavilion closest to the beach. Here, again, a floating tread stairway takes pride of place—a well-trod artery connecting all four levels that is as artistic as it is practical. Its weightless quality complements the glassy upper levels of the house, where, as Kirpatrick puts it, "Instead of doing doors and windows in the walls, the walls are made of doors and windows.

"Our responsibility was to take full advantage of the panorama, pier and sunset" continues Kirkpatrick, "and still maintain a semblance of privacy." To this end, a series of bronze shutter elements that help control the sunlight and its glare off the ocean also buffer those inside from the hustle and bustle of The Strand without totally isolating them. Similarly, sliding, light-diffusing shoji screens in the master suite can be used to separate the bathroom, with its luxurious ofuro soaking tub, from the bedroom.

True to the coastal aesthetic of both California and Scandinavia, interiors were kept simple, uncluttered, and for the most part, neutral in palette. For example, says Clarke, the master bedroom's plaster ceiling "is the palest shade of light blue, like a very early morning sky, calm and peaceful." One exception and contrast to this is the Swedish-red upholstery on the vintage Wegner dining chairs and the club chairs by contemporary designer Monica Förster.

The rooms, which engender a sense of permanence and calm without sacrificing style, reflect the integrity of the architecture in which they're contained. "We like to treat homes as sculpture," says Kirkpatrick. "As the sea grasses grow up around it, this home will slowly and surely weather to produce different, stunning and timeless effects from one year to the next." *

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