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Welcoming IDEAS

Jeffrey Alan Marks's clients knew what they wanted for their new Manhattan Beach house. They invited him into their lives to achieve the results.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY *Jeffrey Alan Marks*
ARCHITECTURE BY *Grant Kirkpatrick*
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Opening page: The hallway and stairway of a home in Manhattan Beach, California, assume a presence both architectural and decorative. A French armchair, portions of which date to circa 1770, is positioned with a Jeffren Alan Marks- designed console table made of leather and oak; the plaster table lamp is by Rose Uniacke. This page: In the great room, a Paul Ferrante lantern hangs over a pair of Howe sofas upholstered with Zak + Fox fabric. The armchair, from Jonas, uses a RoseTarlow pattern.



Above: A corner of the sunroom is lit with both natural light and a blackened steel fixture by The Urban Electric Co. The John Saladino table is made of oak, at which is set an English comb-back Windsor chair, circa 1770, in yew wood, along with a custom bench. Opposite: A Richard Wrightman table is used in the kitchen, along with his MacLaren dining chairs, which are upholstered with a Walter G fabric. The stove is Lacanche.





Opposite: A Kneedler Fauchère/GregoriousIPineo bed in the master bedroom is adorned with custom bedding from Jeffrey Alan Marks; the Swedish Gustavian bench at the foot is an antique. The Galbraith and Paul wallcovering is made of natural linen. This page: Bentley Adams tile is used on the master bath floor. Other elements include a Charles Edwards light fixture and sconces, a Waterworks freestanding tub, and a Kneedler Fauchère stool. The ivory draperies are de Le Cuona.

A true outdoor room, the pool cabana's bar and eating area features a series of bronze pendants with clear glass from Circa Lighting. The David Sutherland Peninsula bar chairs assume a weathered teak finish. The tray on the bar is by Jeffrey Alan Marks for Palecek.



SYNERGY, WHICH DESCRIBES something greater than the sum of its parts, is a term often bundled into business jargon and rarely used in relation to interior design. But it seems just the right word to describe the process by which a beautiful and welcoming new Southern California home has come into being—a home combining the requirements and interests of its owners, paired with the talents and resources of Los Angeles-based designer Jeffrey Alan Marks.

Just a half block from the ocean, this Manhattan Beach house was developed in a collaboration between Marks, architect Grant Kirkpatrick of KAA Design, and homeowners who took an unusually active role in every step of the undertaking. “These clients really did do their research,” says Marks. “They had worked with other designers before—and had done enough houses and lived through enough to know exactly what they wanted. And they’d decided they wanted my stamp on their new house. It’s been years since I’ve worked with clients who wanted to be this involved, and it was refreshing.”

Marks’s clients envisioned a contemporary house that felt English-inspired yet fresh and clean. And because of their proximity to the beach, they wanted the house to have an open California style. The clients were also interested in the mechanics behind Marks’s approach, as well as the rationale for each of his design recommendations. They rolled up their sleeves, attended all the meetings, and went to visit Marks’s other projects—including his own home—to see examples of the interior designer’s work. They genuinely valued his explanations behind everything, leading them to a deeper appreciation for the end result.

“Some clients are happy to pick a room from a catalogue,” says Marks with an easy laugh. “These weren’t those people.”

The couple are native Southern Californians who enjoy entertaining. “There are a lot of Angelenos who will never have you in their home,” Marks says, “but on your first meeting, they’ll likely invite you into theirs. That’s one of the things that attracted me to them. Well, that and the fact that she’s an amazing cook who really uses her kitchen!”

Marks spent time in his clients’ existing home in Montecito, sharing meals and getting to know their high-school-aged children. This offered him a view into their lives, and a sense of what they liked and what they didn’t. Marks says much California design has a sort of “monochromatic,

easy-breezy flow” as you move from one room to the other, but he wanted these rooms to stand alone, creating a sense that “now we’re in the fireplace room where we might gather in the evening, or now we’re in this room doing something else.” He adds, referring to the effect that he desired for this house, “Each time you walked into a room, I wanted a nice kind of surprise—something to distinguish it from the last room you were in.”

To that end, Marks, who disdains recessed downlighting and favors sconces and lamps, designed or specified focal point lighting to establish the personality of each room. He sought handsome fixtures that draw the eye toward interesting beam and ceiling details.

Manhattan Beach houses are typically set on small lots, but Marks’s clients purchased the adjacent parcel, enabling KAA Design to develop a landscaping plan that gives this home the feeling of a compound. “When you look across the pool to the pool house,” Marks says, “you don’t even know there’s a neighbor. It’s a successful design that’s all about the land and what you see when you look out to the garden.”

The homeowners hoped to create a sense of calm, and Marks helped supply it, with his love of cool, ocean-inspired colors coming through in a watery palette suggesting sea glass and driftwood. “It’s their home and it reflects their tastes,” he says, “but it also represents a mix of my interests and personality. There’s a formal, almost city-like feeling about the house, but it exudes a serene, casual vibe as well. When all is said and done, it’s a casual beach house.”

While Marks takes into account all of the details and furnishings that now characterize the rooms in the U-shaped house, he cites the way sunlight moves through it as an especially unusual and beautiful detail. Beyond that natural phenomenon, he says, “I’m especially drawn to a space in the house with a pair of English sofas and low table, what we call the club room. It’s a wonderful place to grab a drink, maybe play some cards, and enjoy a ‘clubby’ kind of atmosphere. It’s in the center of the house with stairways leading both up and down. It’s a more modern space than the rest of the house, and a perfect spot to share cheeses and a bottle of wine. And we have.”

As was his experience here, Jeffrey Alan Marks prefers to be part of a project the moment ground is broken.

“These are clients who love interior design and they love to be at home. A perfect combination.”

—Jeffrey Alan Marks

