

SPATIAL RELATIONS

A new open floor plan and
bright, crisp interiors transform a
Corona del Mar abode.

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Architecture: Bob White, Forest Studio
Interior Design: Kelly Nutt, Kelly Nutt Design
Home Builder: Mike Close, Spinnaker Development





A whimsical figure of a dog greets visitors to this Corona del Mar home. The custom pivot door by Euroline Steel Windows & Doors from Associated Building Supply points to the contemporary vibe found throughout. In the entry, designer Kelly Nutt placed a light fixture she conceived overhead and artwork by Lorraine Pennington on the owners' existing bench.

The Corona del Mar abode one couple set their sights on had all the makings of a forever home. Ideally located and blessed with stunning views of the ocean and harbor as well as Catalina, it boasted expansive square footage and the kind of exceptional artistry that comes from being a handcrafted dwelling. Therein was the rub—because no matter how perfect the house might have been for its original inhabitant, the wants, needs and tastes of the new owners inevitably meant some tweaks would be required.

In this case, the home had been designed to more traditional-leaning specifications, but the subsequent residents had a different vision. Highly social yet self-described homebodies with two children, they quickly recognized that opening up the layout would better suit their lifestyle. Their mental mood boards gravitated toward the look of a New York loft: something open, modern, clean, even a touch industrial. But they didn't rush to renovate. Instead, the family gave themselves a few years to feel out the space. Then they called in the pros. The owners approached designer Kelly Nutt, who then pulled in residential designer Bob White. The couple's longtime friend Mike Close—a frequent visitor who'd witnessed the evolution of their at-home wish list firsthand—took on the construction. Chris Fenmore of Garden Studio Landscape Design rounded out the team.

The vision had been to open up the floor plan from the get-go, effectively solving the lack of flow inherent in the existing layout, which positioned the kitchen in a corner, with a pantry sandwiched between it and the dining room. As White—who worked with architect of record Charles d'Arcy III of d'Arcy and Associates—sketched out options, the pantry emerged as a sticking point. "Imagine much of the main floor as an open box with this big, walk-in, three-walled pantry dropped in the center, breaking up all the rooms," he explains. By moving it, White was able to jigsaw pretty much everything else, too. The dining area moved into the corner where the old kitchen lived; a new open kitchen became a centralized socializing space between the living room and rear yard entertaining area, and

a new pantry landed in a former gallery space that had extended from the entry.

Some of the existing traditional elements remained. "We played off the coffered ceilings that were in the main living space and reworked them to the new layout," says Close. The existing beams in the dining and media room received some cosmetic love. Moreover, the team added or enlarged windows to further capitalize on the panoramic views, too, all in black steel—adding a hip, urban overtone to the home's traditional bones. "Their natural light was probably diminished by at least 50 percent before, whereas now, I'd be surprised if they ever switch on a light on during the day," notes Close. And more black steel appears, used for doors between rooms and notably in the main bathroom.

Nutt, who notes that the couple has amazing taste, focused on balancing their stylish, refined aesthetic with the cozy, timeless feel they desired. "This is now a coastal-casual home married with a sophisticated flat, one of those houses that feels both casual and formal," she says. The palette trends neutral—with sandy hues that nod to Corona del Mar's beach city spirit tempered by the occasional burst of blue—but textures, like linen and wool and the occasional inclusion of block-printed textiles, keep things animated.

As befits the home of avid entertainers, there are plenty of spots to gather: at the expansive dual islands in the kitchen—one counter height, one bar height—and around the great room where the seating options range from leather-covered stools at the bar to a quartet of swivel chairs to couches facing each other beside the fireplace. Found pieces are also sprinkled throughout the house, from the entryway's old Spanish church pew and the main bedroom's vintage wooden hutch to a French limestone trough converted into a sink within the primary powder room. "We went for an approachable, welcoming, timeless look, and I think we achieved it," Nutt notes.

The couple, quick to say that they delight in caring for the home, also doubts they'll ever indeed finish refining it—even though they've put their spin on it so significantly already. Says the husband, "This is our family castle, and we still have plenty of plans for it." ■



Loungy upholstered pieces, such as the Croft House chaise and a quartet of custom swivel chairs wearing a Carolina Irving Textiles pattern, facilitate comfortable conversations. Positioned at the window are a pair of chairs from Nickey Kehoe. Saddle-leather and iron bar chairs pull up to the adjacent bar.

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Above: Nutt selected a Rogers & Goffigon linen for the coverings on the dining area's host chairs. Flanking the sides of the antique table are Hans Wegner wishbone chairs from Design Within Reach. The double-arm pendant and sconces, both by The Urban Electric Co., amplify the sophisticated, loft-like direction of the home. Underfoot are European white-oak planks by Gaetano Hardwood Floors.

Opposite: Custom benches in a Perennials fabric from David Sutherland make for comfy kitchen seating. Farrow & Ball's Railings coats the island, which is topped with quartz; the stone on the perimeter counters is petite granite. The cabinet hardware as well as the zinc-finished pendants that cast a glow above are custom made. The faucets are by Waterworks; the Wolf and Sub-Zero appliances are from Pirch. Thoemmes Cabinet Makers fabricated the casework.





Above: A pendant by The Urban Electric Co. hangs above a Victoria + Albert tub in the main bathroom. Nutt used linens from Thomas Lavin to recover the chairs and treat the windows. The stool is from Juxtaposition Home. The limestone flooring is by Concept Studio.

Left: In the main bedroom, the team kept the existing moldings and added a new fireplace. Benjamin Moore's Simply White serves as a soothing backdrop for the assortment of bespoke pieces, such as the loveseat and coffee table, the found cabinet and carpet and the clients' existing chandelier. The bed—dressed in Frette linens—is from Shoppe Amber Interiors. The lamp is from Juxtaposition Home.