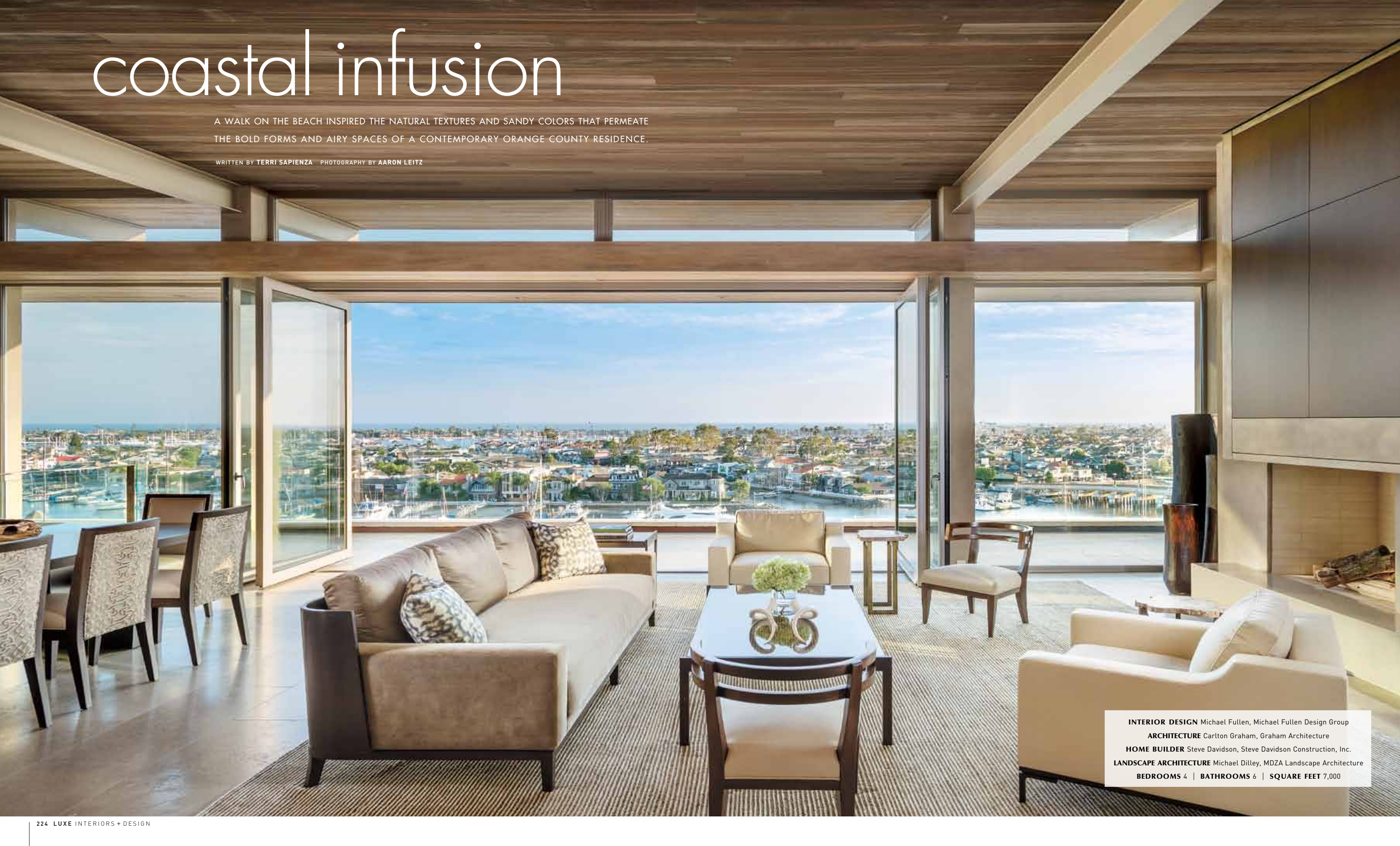


coastal infusion

A WALK ON THE BEACH INSPIRED THE NATURAL TEXTURES AND SANDY COLORS THAT PERMEATE THE BOLD FORMS AND AIRY SPACES OF A CONTEMPORARY ORANGE COUNTY RESIDENCE.

WRITTEN BY TERRI SAPIENZA PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON LEITZ



INTERIOR DESIGN Michael Fullen, Michael Fullen Design Group
ARCHITECTURE Carlton Graham, Graham Architecture
HOME BUILDER Steve Davidson, Steve Davidson Construction, Inc.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE Michael Dilley, MDZA Landscape Architecture
BEDROOMS 4 | BATHROOMS 6 | SQUARE FEET 7,000

Inspired by the palette of local beaches, architect Carlton Graham worked with textured white oak and limestone to define the contemporary forms of an Orange County house. A mahogany gate leads to the entry, which features a pivoting door made of tempered glass.



The moment Gary Matthews Jr. stepped onto a vacant lot in Orange County that had premium vistas of Catalina Island, Balboa Island and the sunset, he knew he had found the location for his future home. The site sat atop a bluff overlooking Newport Harbor, and, on a clear day, offered views all the way up the coast and even out to San Clemente Island. The timing was perfect. After 17 years playing professional baseball, Matthews was ready to take time off to contemplate his next move; now he could build his dream home in the process.

Growing up, Matthews lived in a midcentury Joseph Eichler house. “That house was the beginning of my fondness for modern architecture,” he says, citing its “large sliding glass doors and windows providing plenty of air, light and views.” His vision for the new home included a similar connection to the outdoors, but with a lighter palette, and, as the father of two children, he also needed the interior to accommodate a family.

Graham marked the front façade with custom mahogany garage doors and panels of frosted glass, which provide privacy for a garden courtyard off the master bathroom. Landscape architect Michael Dilley chose blue agave plants, barrel cacti and blue fescue ground cover to complement the surrounding stone.

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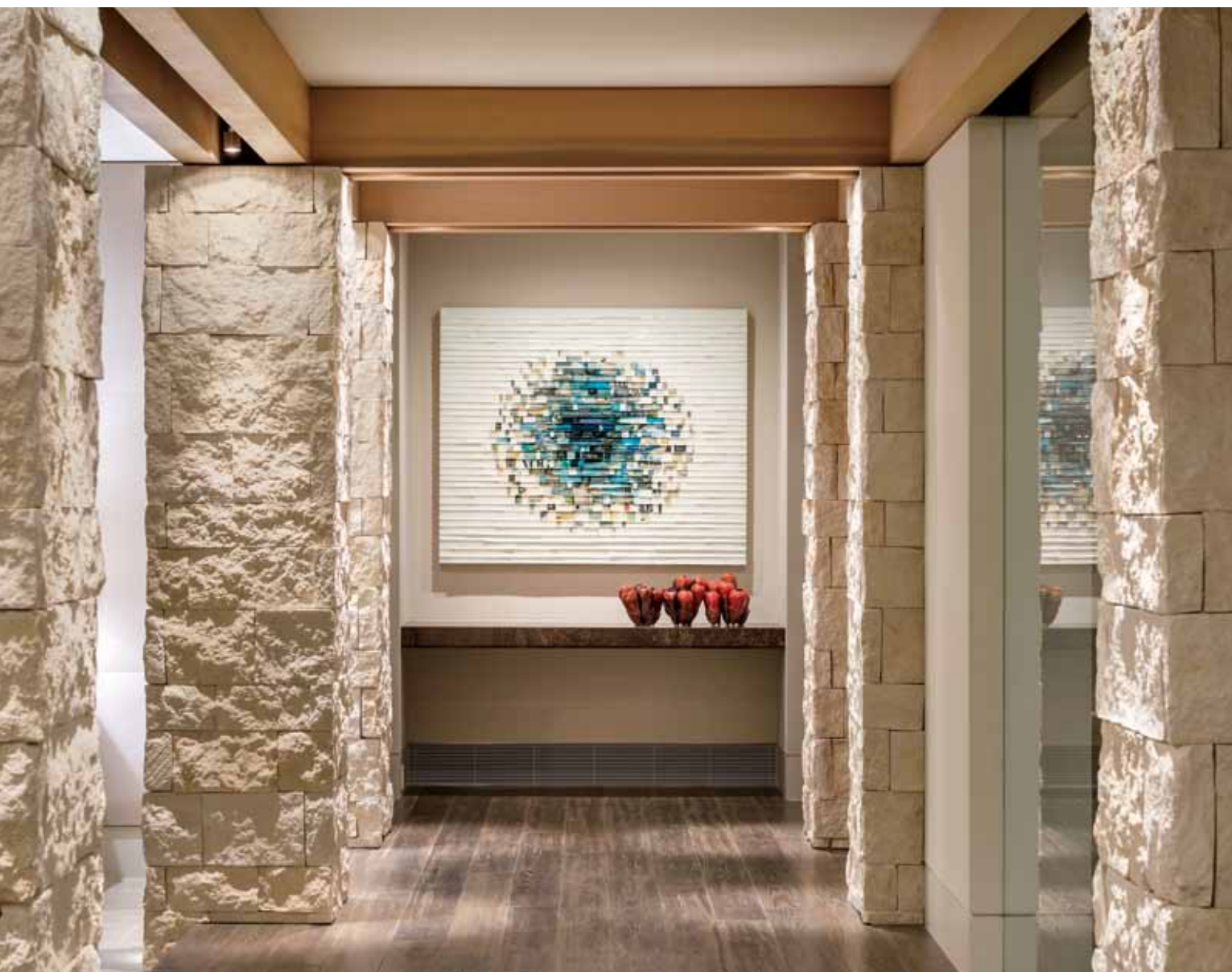
Like a seasoned athlete, Matthews assembled an all-star team of players—including architect Carlton Graham, designer Michael Fullen, builder Steve Davidson, and landscape architect Michael Dilley—to help realize his vision. The team worked together during the 16-month-long build with the goal of creating something that was organic, modern and timeless. “Modern and timeless don’t always go together,” says Fullen. “We also needed to add warmth and real livability.”

The resulting two-story contemporary structure is a masterful mix of natural materials and a feast of textures inspired by the local surroundings. Before the building process began, Graham took a walk to gather inspiration and returned with sand, a piece of driftwood and a handful of pebbles. “I wanted to ensure the palette was a direct derivative of the colors found on native beaches,” he says. As a result, the rift-cut white-oak ceilings are stained to reflect the driftwood, the sea-grass limestone flooring mimics the ocean floor, and the cream shade of the split-face Texas limestone on the interior columns and exterior façade resembles the color of sand.

Working within that nuanced palette, Graham devised a floor plan informed by the site, as well. “Every bedroom and living area has an ocean view,” says the architect, who achieved that by placing two bedroom suites on each floor and separating them with open public spaces in the center. The back of the house opens almost entirely through glass sliding and bifold doors to merge the interior and exterior spaces. To help define the rear façade, he designed a cantilevered roof that acts “like a giant umbrella that shades the interior from our year-round sun,” says the architect.



On the ground floor, the homeowner's office overlooks the family room and bar area, where designer Michael Fullen created a tailored sectional and upholstered it with Great Plains Thick as Thieves fabric. Magic Brown marble from Marbolis tops the bar.



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In appointing the interior, Fullen took his cues from the colors and textures of the building materials, choosing pieces that were clean-lined, contemporary and mostly neutral in color so as to not distract from the view. “When you walk into a house,” he says, “the transition from outside to inside should be seamless.” To that end, Fullen grounded the open living area with a custom hemp-and-silk rug and then paired a sleek Christian Liaigre walnut-backed sofa with a bronze-and-smoked-glass cocktail table. Low-slung Holly Hunt Studio lounge chairs and sophisticated occasional chairs offer flexible seating options in the space.

Keeping with the same muted yet rich palette, Fullen designed dining chairs to pair with a Holly Hunt Studio table, created a comfortable sectional for the family room, and lent softness to the master bedroom by backing a custom bed up to a leather-upholstered wall. When it came

A mixed-media work by James Verbicky is displayed at the end of the ground-floor gallery hall, where wire-brushed white-oak beams crown columns of Texas split-face limestone from Modern Builders Supply.



A wool-and-silk rug by Mansour Modern anchors the family room, where Fullen kept the focus on the views with a subtle palette. He designed custom swivel chairs, upholstered with a Great Plains textile, and accented a custom cocktail table with Shagreen by Edelman Leather.



Appearing to float above the length of the house, the roof was designed by Graham to cantilever more than 10 feet from the rear façade, offering protection from the elements. The teak chaise lounges are by Sutherland.



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The rear façade opens—through custom bifold and sliding glass doors by Weiland—on both levels, allowing for a blurred boundary between indoors and outside. *Opposite:* Another work by Verbicky provides a dramatic focal point in the gallery hall.



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to finishes, the designer purposely kept things quiet. “Most of the cabinetry is finished in matte lacquer, and most of the countertops are honed,” he says. “I didn’t want anything to be overly shiny or loud.”

Outside, the grounds are as refined as the interiors. “It’s a sophisticated, drought-tolerant landscape with a lot of texture,” says Dilley, who chose sculptural plants to lend “a softer edge to the strong architecture.” The backyard landscaping surrounds a four-sided infinity-edge pool that appears to spill over into the hillside; building it was one of the toughest challenges of the project, says Davidson, but worth the effort. “The pool brings the view, the water and the contemporary look of the house all together,” he says.

With the help of his team, Matthews says the house of his dreams has exceeded his expectations. “Happy isn’t a strong enough word,” he says. “I’m ecstatic about the way it turned out and excited about what we were able to accomplish. I feel like we really created something special.” **L**

In the master bathroom, a vein-cut travertine countertop complements custom eucalyptus cabinetry fabricated by Bayshore Tech. A sculptural tub from Wetstyle’s Ove collection is fitted with a Graff floor-mounted tub filler. The Phoenix Day wall sconces are from Thomas Lavin.



Fullen upholstered the wall behind the custom bed in the master bedroom with Stingray by Holly Hunt Leather, and he configured the lines of the grid to match up with those of the window casings. A Thomas O’Brien lamp from Visual Comfort & Co. rests on a custom table.