



Modern Rewrite on the Beach

SMART LINES AND A REFRESHED
PALETTE FOR MALIBU

Architect Ron Goldman reinvigorated the façade of a contemporary Malibu, California, house for owners Jim and Diane Kahan by angling and adding windows to the stucco wall and elongating the curved window of the stairwell corridor.



Renovation Architecture
by Ron Goldman of
Goldman Firth Rossi
Interior Architecture and
Design by Jamie Bush & Co.
Text by Peter Haldeman
Photography by
Tim Street-Porter

Walls of glass overlooking a sweep of sea and sky interrupted only by a sailboat and a few gulls...are there many things on earth as seductive as an ocean view? Ask Diane and Jim Kahan, whose lives were transformed by a single glimpse out those windows. "When we walked into the house, we were so overwhelmed by the view, we really thought the place was turnkey," Diane Kahan says of the 5,000-square-foot Malibu residence the couple now call their beach house. "We were there with our agent, we met the owners as they were coming home, we made an offer."

If their response was a bit hasty—the house proved to be anything but turnkey—the Kahans' decision to acquire the property fully furnished did buy them some time to enjoy the beach while they figured out what the place needed in order to shine—which turned out to be quite a lot. The five-story contemporary structure was not long on curb appeal: Its façade of two plaster-clad cubic forms mediated by a heavy bronze-wrapped stair window and a long front wall felt harsh and unwelcoming. The entrance was choppy. The spiral staircase connecting the five floors was jagged and awkward. And the rooms were dark, cut

By creating a neutral palette, says interior designer Jamie Bush, "the main focus really becomes the ocean beyond." The mixed-media artwork is by Carolyn Cole. Pale pillow fabrics from Bergamo. Richard Schultz table and Summit Furniture chairs on deck.







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off from each other and oddly configured. "There wasn't a straight wall in the house," Diane Kahan laments.

The Kahans, whose primary residence is in San Antonio, Texas, hired Malibu-based architect Ron Goldman of Goldman Firth Rossi Architects and West Hollywood designer Jamie Bush of Jamie Bush & Co. to revamp the place. Electing to work

within the existing footprint, Goldman lightened the plaster walls on either side of the stair window by cutting slit windows into them and by changing their color from a grayish beige to a shade of white as cool and serene as an iceberg. His signature move was to transform the bronze stair window into a dramatic columnar wall of glass framed by straight and flowing bands



of aluminum: "We played with this vertical curved element in contrast to the wall in front and had fun with the break-up of the glass, following the curve of the stair inside. With the front wall we introduced a reflective blue-green glass to contrast with the plaster walls and to mimic the reflectivity of the ocean."

In the entrance, an obstructive wall was removed and a

set of narrow slate stairs was replaced with cascading steps of sand-colored limestone—a material that extends from the front gate all the way out to the balconies in back, erasing unnecessary distinctions between indoors and out. The staggered staircase was reshaped into a sinuous ribbon; it wraps around an atrium hung with 17 ethereal white light spheres. Throughout the

house, rooms were opened up by losing walls and gaining windows.

"None of the spaces made any sense," declares Bush, brandishing some cavelike "before" photos of the place. "We redesigned everything." He eliminated a kitchen counter to open the room to the living and dining areas, fashioning a single loftlike space that seems to float above the ocean

ABOVE LEFT: Bush, who also reconfigured the interiors, opened up the kitchen/breakfast area, which features another painting by Cole. Cooktop, VikingRange.com. Sink and faucet, Kohler. Arclinea cabinetry throughout. **ABOVE:** *Rain II* by Peter Kuttner hangs in the media room. Ralph Lauren Home throw.





like the deck of a boat. He took out old built-ins, put in custom cabinetry and coordinated the soffits to unify the space. Upstairs, Bush reconfigured bedrooms for comfort and flow and installed frameless showers and shimmering glass tiles to brighten the bathrooms. Goldman added windows to capture more views.

As for the look of the rooms, says the designer, "the clients didn't want what you would typically expect on the beach in Malibu—relaxed, natural, laidback California living. They really wanted this sort of pristine white art gallery on the ocean that was very edited." Collectors of art glass, the Kahans picked out a glass-bowl sink for their powder room that generated the white-on-white scheme of the entire house. Leather furniture, high-gloss cabinetry, plaster walls—all were based on the same pure white as the Corian countertops. Contemporary artwork and glass provide pops of bright color, like flashy shells on a sun-bleached beach.

However, the main attraction will always be right outside those floor-to-ceiling windows. "We still go crazy when the dolphins go by," confides Jim Kahan. Recently retired, with four grown children, he and his wife have plenty of time to unwind these days. And for all the sophistication of their getaway, it remains, first and last, a beach house. "We had 60 days over 100 degrees in San Antonio last summer," he reports, "but we were in Malibu, where every day it's 75 and the only question is: Is the sky blue, or is the fog going to burn off at 10 in the morning?" □

"We like big spaces, a lot of light and a good flow," Diane Kahan says. The sand, the sea and the two unattributed abstract torso paintings inspired the hues of the master bedroom. Pillow shams and quilted coverlet from Calvin Klein. Carpet from Mohawk.