

INTERIOR DESIGN / OHARA DAVIES-GAETANO,
OHARA DAVIES-GAETANO INTERIORS
ARCHITECTURE / RICHARD KRANTZ,
RICHARD KRANTZ ARCHITECTURE INC.
HOME BUILDER / RICK HENRICKSEN,
PRIDEMARK CONTRACTORS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / DANIEL STEWART,
DANIEL STEWART & ASSOCIATES LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

TRUE NATURE

A NEWPORT COAST HOME CHANNELS
THE CHARACTER OF ITS OWNERS
AND ITS ITALIAN ROOTS.

WRITTEN BY JORGE S. ARANGO / PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD POWERS

The key to authenticity in architecture and interiors is a commitment to truth—in materials, genre and details. But a home also must be true to its owners—it must be wholly theirs. That was the driving impulse for the design of this Newport Coast Italian-style villa. With their family expanding, the homeowners had gone house-hunting, having outgrown their former abode. “We never intended to build a home,” says the wife, “but we found this fabulous lot.” So, she called designer Ohara Davies-Gaetano, with whom she had previously collaborated, and architect Richard Krantz to create a tailor-made residence.

As the designer and architect worked to understand the home’s innate, functional purpose, they naturally began with their clients. “She’s very grounded,” observes Davies-Gaetano. Adds Krantz, “They’re social people. It’s a used house, not an heirloom, do-not-touch sort of house.” However, the homeowners’ individual personalities and needs had to be balanced by the requirements of the Newport Coast community where the home is located. Residences there are required to have a certain mass—no see-through modernist glass boxes. In fact, says the architect, “They limit the width of the windows and doors unless they look genuine.” To address that requirement, he alternated thick-framed Italian-made windows with large, steel-framed windows and doors.



Designer Ohara Davies-Gaetano placed a custom swivel chair in a Lelièvre fabric and a Rose Tarlow Melrose House sofa in the living room of a Newport Coast residence. Glamorous elements—a Porta Romana chandelier and Rose Tarlow Melrose House mirrors—balance more organic touches, such as a Baker occasional table by the window and a Jiun Ho side table. Tom Lieber's painting injects dynamic energy.

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Architect Richard Krantz's vision for the home included ample windows, such as the Steelworks Etc. ones in the breakfast nook, framed by draperies in a Pollack fabric. A Dirk de Bruycker painting punctuates the space, where a Gregorius Pineo table base with a stone top is surrounded by wing chairs and the clients' own stools in Glant fabrics. Overhead is a Magni Home Collection chandelier.



Those windows take advantage of a particularly pleasing feature of the site: Rather than just having views toward the rear of the house, the property boasts harbor views on three sides. In response, Krantz devised an L-shaped plan, allowing for multiple sight lines at each wing while using larger windows in key areas to frame the principal harbor view. Another benefit of the layout: "It doesn't reveal its composition all at once," says Krantz. "I design a house like a movie or a novel, so you experience it in scenes or chapters. It's meant to be a readable story." And, he adds, "Everything here is authentic."

Truth in materials turned out to be a boon for general contractor Rick Henricksen. "I enjoyed going back to the old process of real, master-crafted plaster moldings," he says. "That just doesn't happen much anymore." Nor does the extent of fine millwork, which often needed to curve around elliptical rooms like the entry hall, the bar and baths. No less than four companies contributed to that effort, which required Henricksen to devise "a control sample for all the cabinet drawers so they all knew the components and interiors had to be the same and fit

together in a certain way." Complex ceiling work—vaulting, millwork patterns and more—and mosaics added other layers of substance and character.

Davies-Gaetano concentrated on the interiors. While the wife favors a neutral palette and has an aesthetic that leans more contemporary than traditional, "you have to build within the confines of the Italian architectural style and can't really ignore that," says the designer. So, to work within the more traditional Italian vein, Davies-Gaetano avoided sleek modern sofas and very contemporary appointments. Instead, she picked pieces that were traditional in form but light in color, mostly clean and unornamented, such as the rolled-arm sofas in the living room or the pedestal table in the dining room. And the designer childproofed many of her selections with high-performance fabrics and outdoor leathers.

Children, of course, don't rule the entire roost. So, says Davies-Gaetano, "An underlying theme was to make sure there was a little bit of understated glamour. You feel its presence. It's there and makes sense, but it doesn't dominate." Refined fabrics, furnishings and finishes—

The home's graceful stair hall hints at the abundant architectural details found throughout, executed by general contractor Rick Henricksen. Beside the curving stair, marked by an Elizabeth Eakins runner, are wingback chairs upholstered in a Weitzner fabric. Accenting the chairs are Sivaana pillows.

An outdoor seating area, visible between the living room's draperies in a Nobilis fabric, is the perfect place to take in the grounds designed by landscape architect Daniel Stewart. Inside is a coffee table from Bliss Studio atop a Tamarian rug.



resins, marbles and metals exuding subtle shimmer and shine—thread through the predominantly white palette. For example, two gilt starburst mirrors are inset into niches in the living room, while a glass-and-chrome chandelier crowns the kitchen nook and a bathroom features a mirrored vanity. The luxe touches are balanced with more rustic metals and unpolished surfaces. “I don’t want everything to match, to be perfect, because life’s not like that,” says Davies-Gaetano, pointing to elements such as an iron lamp from Mexico she chose for the living room. “You have to have a contrast to create depth,” she says.

Outside, Davies-Gaetano approached those spaces much as she would those inside. “I try to mix pieces from different manufacturers and have it feel more like an extension of the home,” she notes, adding that the dining furniture is reminiscent of something you’d find indoors. The furnished outdoor spaces sit within a steeply graded lot that “created challenges as well as design

opportunities,” says landscape architect Daniel Stewart. “Many hillside villas in Italy deal with similar issues, so I channeled a bit of the Italian ingenuity of terracing the land with planter walls, stone terraces and integrating steps and water features to create inviting and graceful transitions between levels.” These connect through paths of finely cut stone (versus irregularly shaped, rough-edged pavers). Plants, such as olive trees, boxwood and rosemary, also follow the Italian theme.

And, much as a classic Italian villa would evolve over time, “The home took on its own energy and unfolded before us as our needs and desires changed,” says the wife. “Unfolded,” in fact, is an excellent way to think of anything that is honest. True authenticity must arise over time and as a natural response to environments and eras. It must, in other words, unfold and develop into what it is, into an embodiment of the spirit that lies at its core. This home does that with grace. ■

Davies-Gaetano used the clients’ existing table and chairs in the dining room and hung a Murano glass chandelier above. Beneath artwork by Michael Buscemi is a buffet from David Sutherland. The vases on the buffet and blue bowl on the dining table are by Micucci.

Cowtan & Tout wallpaper and draperies in a Sahco fabric make for a stylish backdrop in the master bedroom, where Donghia fabric envelopes the bed. By the fireplace is an Ebanista console and illuminating the space is a Paul Ferrante fixture.

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