



WRITTEN BY KRISSA ROSSBUND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LISA ROMEREIN

Carved into Beauty

A PASSIONATE DESIGN TEAM
CHIPS AWAY AT A BOUNTY OF
GOOD IDEAS TO REVEAL THE
ONES THAT MATTER MOST





A

lan and Wendy Topher's home on California's Crystal Cove started with a summer vacation, a Pinterest board, and a bar of Ivory soap.

The Texas couple's primary residence is in Austin, but after spending 13 summers taking in the Pacific Ocean breeze at a Laguna Beach, California, resort property, they knew they wanted a place of their own to enjoy the indoor-outdoor lifestyle that California's climate encourages.

Dining room A modern chandelier with a lyrical form hangs above a classic table and chair combination. **Courtyard** Defined by a black-and-white reclaimed marble floor and an 18th-century fireplace surround, the walled courtyard allows airflow but protects from the chilly ocean breeze. **Previous pages** The stately curved staircase winds around a fixture that dangles glass disks from top level to main level. Designer Ohara Davies-Gaetano sits among French antiques in the breezeway.





Kitchen Davies-Gaetano introduced warm tones into the kitchen. Oak cabinetry matches the coffered ceiling while brass pendants descend over Calacatta marble countertops and cast an elegant glow. Both the range and the ruched barstools accent the room with blue, the color that ribbons through the house and references the nearby water.









The first challenge for the new home was the architecture. Community covenants require that exterior housing styles maintain a Mediterranean or Italianate aesthetic for unity throughout the neighborhood. But inside, the house could show off its own personality and does so through the vision of interior designer Ohara Davies-Gaetano and architect Richard Krantz. The pair previously had worked together on projects and aimed for an integrated architecture and design plan.

“I didn’t want an obvious break where the architecture ended and where the interior design began,” Davies-Gaetano says. “I wanted interiors that were fresh and clean to support

Open-air dining room This beachside eating space is about tone and texture, led by stone walls and bleached Douglas fir applied to the ceiling. A blue-and-white settee repeats the water and sky color theme. **Family room** Four armchairs, covered in a blue performance material, swivel to face a pair of raffia-clad cocktail tables—or the TV that is disguised above the fireplace by artwork painted by Davies-Gaetano’s father.

the structure’s modern sensibilities but with antiques that create history where there was none.”

The house is bolstered with decorative heavyweights: coffered ceilings, windows that lure natural light, and architectural antiques such as an 18th-century door from the South of France that was installed in the entry breezeway to welcome with authenticity and soul. But the showstopper is a graceful staircase, imagined by Krantz and first chiseled from a bar of Ivory soap—a model of the solid curve that now shapes the foyer.

“I come from a family of artists and always look at a staircase as an opportunity for art,” Krantz says. “Ohara had a Pinterest board that showed a staircase that was solid. For this staircase, I mimicked the swirl that tops an ice cream cone. I embrace all forms of communication with my craft from sketches to computer-generated elevations. In this case, I carved from soap to show what the team of craftsmen would build.”





THE CLIENTS BROUGHT
TOGETHER A GREAT TEAM
THAT THEY TRUSTED. TO ME,
THAT'S EVERYTHING.”

—designer Ohara Davies-Gaetano

Loggia The furniture arrangement of the loggia—comfortable seating, shapely tables, and a pair of geometric stools—rests on a tile material from Italy discovered by homeowner Wendy Topher. “I threw everyone a curveball with this handmade brick,” she says. “I had my heart set on it. Ohara and Richard were both open to my ideas, which made this project a true collaboration.”





With sophisticated furnishings, fabrics, fixtures, art, and antiques layered over the compelling architecture, the house is now complete. But the Tophers' life there has just begun.

"We wanted this house to represent all of the places where we've been," Wendy says. "We honeymooned in France. We vacationed in California. We brought all of our travels and my love for design to the table. And we couldn't be more grateful to Ohara, Richard, and the craftsmen. So many people's hands touched this house, and it shows." 🏡

Designer: Ohara Davies-Gaetano **Architect:** Richard Krantz

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Master bedroom suite The intention for the master bedroom was serenity. Simple silhouettes don't compete with ocean views. To enhance the antique French theme that quietly whispers throughout the house, Provençal blue built-ins stand on each side of the antique French fireplace surround. A private patio is accessed through the bedroom or the bathroom. Linen drapery panels soften the bathroom's lines.

