

CONNECTED TO THE EARTH

Vanessa Alexander formulates a stunning compound that defines Malibu's legendary casual elegance

Story by *ABIGAIL STONE* Photos by *SAM FROST*

The custom viewing platform, constructed from reclaimed scaffolding is plump with cushions created from Sunbrella fabrics and Indian textiles, creating the ideal spot from which to enjoy Malibu's sunsets.





In a corner of the main house, a quartet of custom chairs cluster around Pinch's limited-edition Nim Natural coffee table. The art is by Mattea Perrotta.



A rug from Mehraban defines the main home's living room. An Alexander Design couch and coffee table shares space with a Faye Toogood chair, a Jacques Adnet lamp and a recliner from Osvaldo Borsani. The art on the mantelpiece is by James Lee Byars.



In the main home's den, a custom couch sits under art by Scott Szegesi, surrounded by brass wall lamps from Workstead.

PEOPLE OFTEN ENVISION Malibu as a coastal version of Beverly Hills. But the reality couldn't be further from that vision. The seaside town 15 miles north of Santa Monica is a laid-back beach community that caters to the surfing-obsessed. In fact, it was the legendary waves that made Vanessa Alexander of Alexander Design's clients, a Lake Tahoe-based couple and their teenage children, quickly fall in love with the town's laissez-faire vibe. So when this Point Dume home overlooking the Pacific became available, they did not let it go.

The intention was to raze a trio of existing buildings and erect one new modern home that took advantage of the acre and a half's crystalline views. However, Alexander saw potential in the home's three structures—the main home, a pool house and a caretaker's cottage. Picturing the airy, open compound that could be erect once the old

stucco tiles were banished, she assured the clients that what they desired could be achieved with far less effort. "I may have talked myself out of a bigger job," she laughs. Though initially skeptical, the significantly reduced budget and slim 10-month timeline—not to mention Alexander's vision and enthusiasm—convinced them.

Alexander began in the main house, tearing down the partitions that separated the kitchen from the living room and dining room, creating a large central space that looks out over the pool. Dropped ceilings were demolished, interiors whitewashed. Clear glass replaced the home's tinted windows and skylights were cut into the roof, underscoring the home's newfound brightness. In the kitchen, a backsplash of Exquisite Surfaces' Fez Zellige tiles in Snow White sparkles in the sun. "You're just enveloped in natural light now," marvels Alexander.

Gray poured concrete floors ground the space and easily withstand sandy feet and dripping bathing suits. Architectural details that had been hidden, like the undulating archways that define the covered arcade separating the main house from the pool, came into sharp focus. Trees that obscured the view were removed. "You just didn't get a sense of where you were before," says Alexander.

The two smaller spaces that flank the main building received the same treatment. Kitchens—a new installation in the two-story former pool house, updates in the caretaker's cottage—make them completely self-sufficient. To lasso together the three structures, Alexander laid down pale decking, created from reclaimed scaffolding, which embraces the area around the pool and connects the three buildings. It also forms the pathway that leads down to the ocean as well as a grand viewing



The dining area, also the setting for homework, craft projects and board games, abuts the kitchen. A woven light from Nicky Kehoe, one of a trio in this room, dangles over a built-in custom sectional.

platform with its built-in seating, ideal for watching the sunset.

Once the framework was complete, the designer turned her attention to the interior furnishings. To keep focus on the exterior, Alexander stuck to a controlled palette of mostly whites, grays and blacks that allows Mother Nature's bright greens and blues to take center stage. "It's super soothing and underlines the flow to the outdoors," notes Alexander of the hues.

A Lacanche stove in the main home's kitchen is covered in a deeper shade of the floors, like the cloudy gray of a Malibu morning. Similar to the kitchen's cabinetry, which mimics the color of sand, most of the furniture is custom, including the couches, the main home's dining table and the bed in its master whose headboard stretches across one wall of the bright room. From the hanging lamps purchased at Nickey Kehoe to the vintage finds—including the Arne Norell chair and Moroccan hassock in the former caretaker's cottage—the interiors radiate casual, comfortable elegance. "It feels luxurious but in a low-key way," says Alexander. "I think we brought out what's most beautiful about the architecture."



An Alexander Design custom headboard, which stretches across one wall of the main home's master bedroom, incorporates the room's nightstands.



In the guest kitchen, custom cabinetry, created from bleached white oak, is paired with a Lacanche stove.