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# LIGHT TOUCH

SET AGAINST A SERENE BACKDROP, A GRACEFUL MIX OF FURNISHINGS AND CONTEMPORARY ART INSTILL A LAGUNA BEACH HOME WITH SUBTLE SOPHISTICATION AND GRACIOUS LIVABILITY.

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Before fate intervened in the form of an invitation to a neighborhood party, Chad Eisner's clients had been living in their Laguna Beach house for going on five years. They loved its stunning ocean views and easy access to the beach. Less beloved were the heavy, traditional-feeling interiors, a far cry from their own preference for a simpler, more modern look. Smitten with their neighbors' contemporary home and its sleek interiors, the work of Eisner, the couple promptly phoned the designer and asked for a consultation.

Noted for his tailored, layered spaces, Eisner immediately saw a disconnect between his clients' light, youthful spirit and their home's dark interiors. "They're energetic, vivacious people, and the interiors did not reflect them," he confides. "Every wall had deep color-washed roses, peaches and yellows that didn't do anything for the architecture. The space has beautiful thick plaster walls, high ceilings and rich wood tones and beams. All these dark, hot colors made it feel oppressive and closed-in."

The couple asked Eisner for a wholly unique look that would combine a modern, somewhat midcentury vibe, with the sand-between-the-toes livability of a seaside resort. "They wanted kids, neighbors and family members to be able to come over, walk in with sand on their feet, sit in the living room and not feel as if they are going to wrinkle the brand-new linen sofa," says the designer.

Eisner began by removing all the color from the walls. "From there, I worked closely with the homeowners to get just the right white for the milk-brushed finish," he says. "Within a week's time of getting that color, it was like night and day." The soft patina captured the depth and shadows of the hand-plastered walls, and, notes Eisner, "suddenly things were light and open."

Window treatments received a close look, too. "We took down some heavier curtains and replaced them with sheer, unlined versions throughout the more formal areas," Eisner explains. "This house looks out toward the ocean and gets really beautiful morning light, so being able to let that in was key."

**Opposite:** Designer Chad Eisner hung a tiered chandelier from Paul Ferrante in the living room of a Laguna Beach home. The sofa sports a solid from Scalamandré, while the custom tufted armchairs wear a Pindler fabric. A rug from Africa, a find of the homeowners, grounds the space.

**Below left:** Above a custom Lucite console, a work by Karina El Azem makes a graphic statement. Sheers of a Coraggio fabric filter the seaside light.

**Below right:** Soft Tibetan lamb from Pacific Hide and Leather swathes a rocker from HD Buttercup near a painting by an unknown artist.





Midcentury-inspired touches in the breakfast room include an Arteriors Home Sherman light fixture and walnut chairs from Organic Modernism. The concrete-topped table with an iron base is from HD Buttercup.



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-CHAD EISNER

Eisner then swapped out the heavy wrought-iron light fixtures, replacing them with more ethereal versions. “We chose fixtures with exposed glass—things that felt airy,” he notes. “In the hallway, for instance, we used transparent blue-colored glass pendants that the eye and sunlight can travel through.”

For the furnishings, the designer combined a host of new finds with some old favorites. “My clients had some great pieces already and some they just didn’t want to let go of,”

says the designer. “For example, they had an antique rug that they purchased while traveling. It had been in another room in the house. We moved it to the living room and it became the determining factor for the look.” The rug brings a splash of color and a Bohemian underpinning for the chic, playful space, where it happily mixes with traditional forms (think tufted armchairs) and a pair of rockers covered in luxurious Tibetan lamb. “It was like weaving a blanket. We’d thread in something contemporary and pair it with something with age and patina,” Eisner recalls. Further enriching the tapestry are pieces with the midcentury modern vibe beloved by his clients.

The final touch was a palette of cool, serene colors that stand out against the creamy walls. A blue-and-gray scheme appears in rugs and upholstery and on the lower half of the walls in the master bedroom. Complementing each room are vibrant works of contemporary art the clients assembled with the help of art advisor Hayley Miner.



Tolix stools from Design Within Reach pull up to the kitchen’s marble-topped island, which is illuminated by a pair of Visual Comfort pendants. Antique terra-cotta tiles from Exquisite Surfaces line the floor.





Custom oak side tables topped with vintage Hermès lamps flank the family room's custom sofa; above is a painting by Eric Freeman. Sillon Flotante armchairs from Svenska Möbler nestle into a luxurious carpet from International Flooring.





**Left:** In the dining room, a rustic wood table and benches, overseen by a carved antique Italian chandelier, offset the formality of the Exquisite Surfaces limestone floor and fireplace.

**Opposite:** Shades of blue and cream thread through the house. A custom oak console, top right, stands near a work by artist Fay Ray in the dining room. The crystal sconce brings whimsy to the space. In the family room, bottom right, Knoll chairs in Pierre Frey's Nairobi fabric surround a table from Design Within Reach.





“Their art collection before was more centered around the house’s previous aesthetic—period pieces and landscapes,” says Eisner. “My client told me she wanted to incorporate more modern pieces, so that’s why I introduced her to Hayley.” With Miner, the owner assembled a carefully curated collection focused on abstract contemporary works with a strong conceptual edge, heavy on artists from California. “She’s been collecting ever since,” Eisner notes. “It’s been great seeing that love of art flourish.”

Recast over time, the house now authentically reflects its residents. “We worked slowly on this project, building the collection of furnishings as we needed them. In truth, it was a test of patience for me,” confides Eisner. “I’m used to working on ground-up projects where everything is new and things go quickly. This was a gradual process of layering elements to create a new approach to the house that spoke to and from the homeowners. That’s really important to me, because when I’m done with my work, they are the ones who have to live, eat and sleep there.”

Chris Miller’s *Petals*, above the master bedroom’s Holly Hunt bed upholstered in material from Innovations, offers dimension, movement and color. Illuminating the space is a box-pleated Delta IV fixture from Twentieth.

In the master bedroom, a chaise from Adesso Eclectic Imports and a table from Berbere World Imports face a window framed by draperies in fabric from Diamond Foam & Fabric. The rug from Mehraban imparts serenity and softness.

