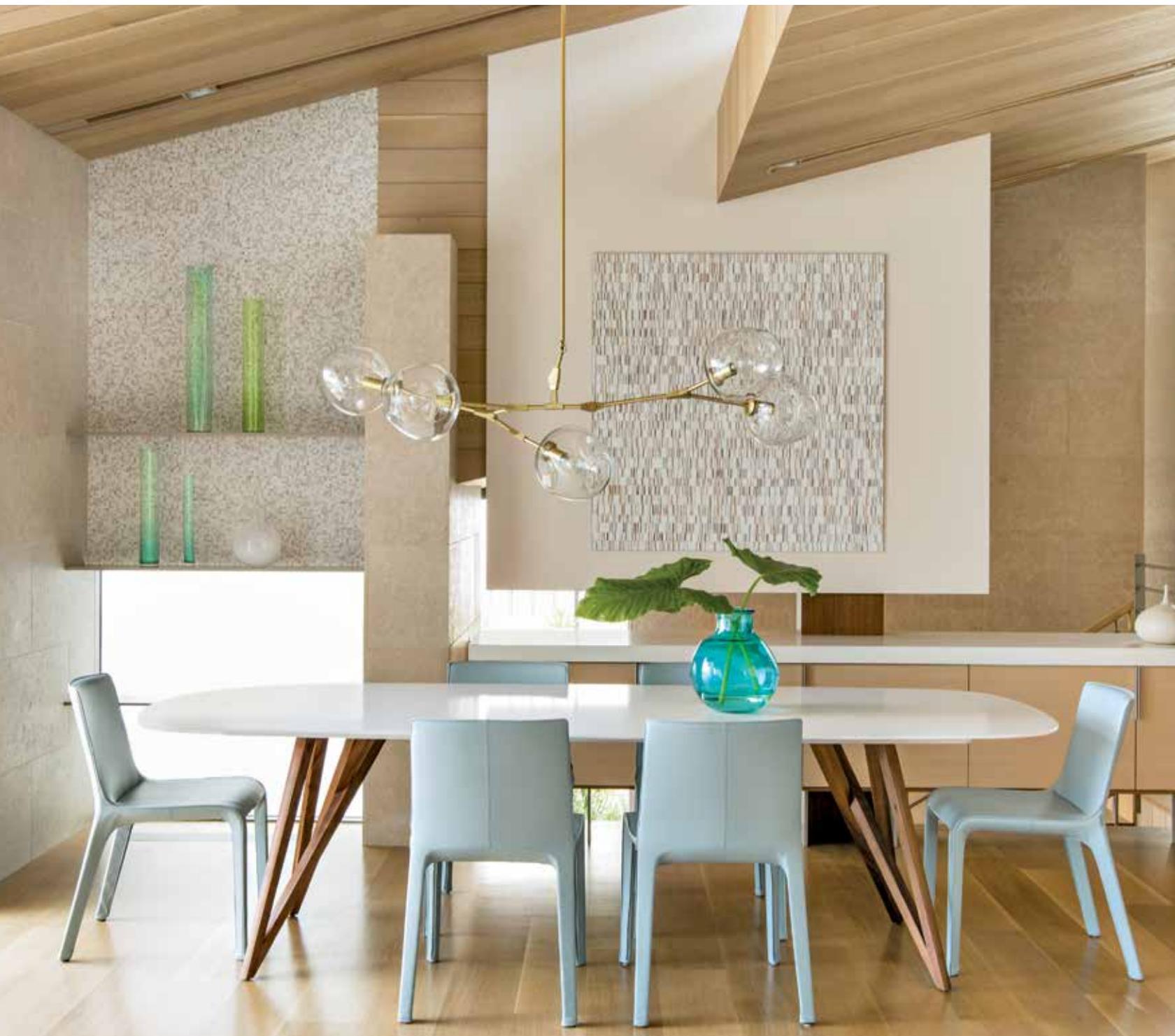


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BRAVING *the*TERRAIN

AN ARCHITECT DESIGNS A SURPRISING BEACH HOUSE IN LAGUNA BEACH ON A SEEMINGLY UNBUILDABLE LOT.

WRITTEN BY MAILE PINGEL / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ELLIS



Architect James R. Harlan imagined a stunning waterfront home in Laguna Beach for his client, with whom he collaborated to furnish the residence. In the living area, a pair of Flexform sofas and a coffee table, all from In-Ex, rest on a custom patchwork rug from Decorative Carpets. The fireplace wall displays sculptures made from eroded teak mortars by Jérôme Abel Seguin. By the Fleetwood windows are a Saarinen table and chairs from Knoll.



Finding a jaw-dropping Laguna Beach lot overlooking the Pacific Ocean complete with approved drawings for a home to replace the existing 1930s bungalow on the site would be enough for most people. But architect James R. Harlan's client was looking for something more. With family in the building business and a veteran of three other projects with the architect, "the owner wanted a home that matched the spectacular location," says Harlan, so he obliged her by creating a residence sited on a slope 80 feet above the water. "It fully acknowledges that it's sculpted to the land."

To get things started, Harlan asked his client for a list of the key rooms she envisioned in the new house—a list he turned into three different design schemes. The winning design is a multilevel plan that hugs the hillside. "It's complicated and had to be shoehorned into the site," says builder Bob Smith, who recently retired. The 4,900-square-foot structure was laid out under a standing-seam serrated roof, which became a key design and organizing feature. "The roof was meant to echo waves rolling onto shore," says Harlan, and its form translated into dramatic interior spaces. "I have this thing with ceilings. They're neglected these days but historically they were exalted. It's the largest surface in the house—it should never be static."

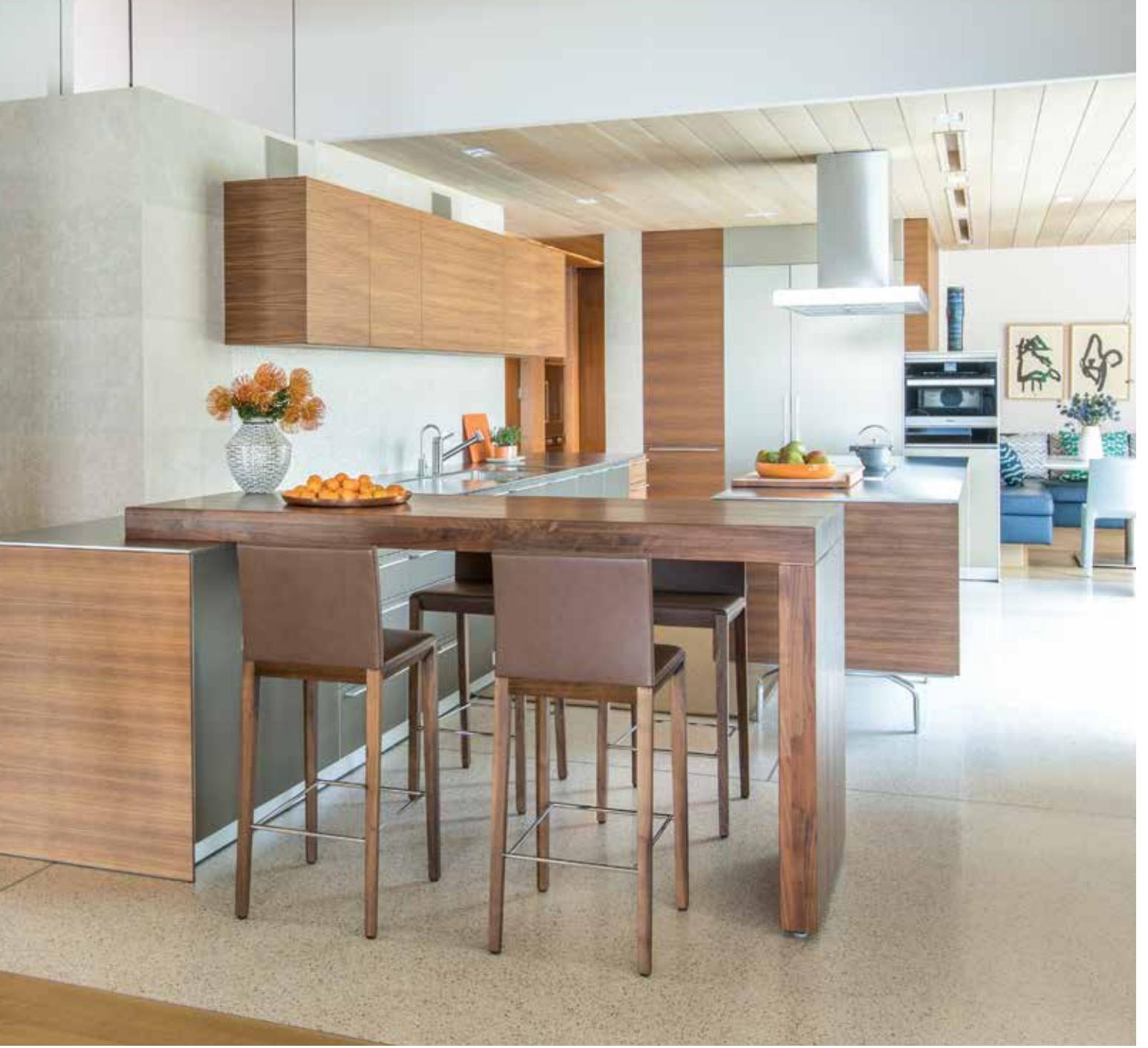
Beneath the roof, Harlan arranged a multi-floor plan that embraces the site's challenging contours. At the street level, the architect placed the garage and office, along with an entry gate that functions as the front door. From the gate,



Above the built-in buffet conceived by Harlan in the dining area is a Robert Greene painting from Robert Miller Gallery in New York City. Beneath the Lindsey Adelman chandelier from Twentieth are a table and chairs from In-Ex. Suspended nearby is a wood surfboard.

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-JAMES R. HARLAN



stairs lead down to a boardwalk running along one side of the pool, where landscape architect Larry Steinle of Landscape Architecture Studio designed the tailored grounds. To reach the house, it's a quick hop across stepping stones to a terrace where sliding doors open to the main floor and the primary living spaces and master suite. "It's charming and idiosyncratic," Harlan says of the house, "but I'm also half German, so my floor plans are tidy and organized."

Harlan's meticulous planning extended to the rich materials palette he used. "I'd say maybe 5 to 10 percent of the house is drywall and the rest is something else," he says. "I love materials and I'm good with texture, scale and color." Throughout the home, which includes a lower level composed of a media room, lounge area, guest room and expansive entertaining deck, the architect employed two different flooring materials: oak and terrazzo blended with abalone shells—the latter acting as a border around the

home's interior. On the living room's fireplace wall, Harlan used stone and micro tile to create a juxtaposition of textures that play off the terrazzo, while in the master bathroom he lined the Japanese-style soaking tub with the same blue tiles that cover the pool, which is visible from the bathroom.

The Bulthaup kitchen features stainless-steel counters and a walnut breakfast bar top paired with leather Walter Knoll counter chairs from In-Ex. Gaggenau manufactured the cooktop and hood; the convection oven and refrigerator are Miele. Underfoot are custom terrazzo floors by JZ Terrazzo.



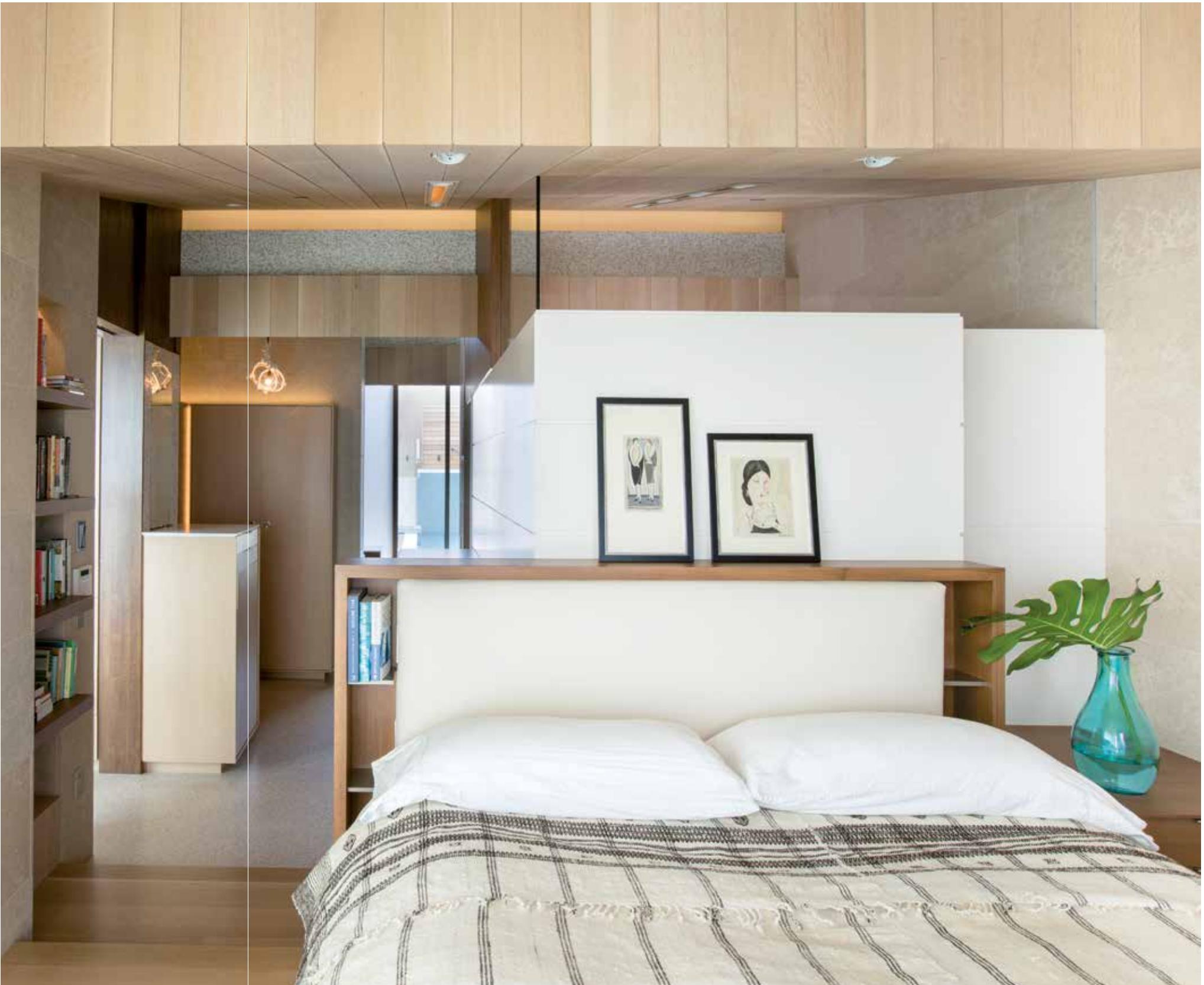
Lithographs, from Robert Motherwell's *Beau Geste Suite*, purchased at Leslie Sacks Gallery, reside in the breakfast nook just beyond the kitchen. A. Rudin fabricated the banquette, where indoor-outdoor Christopher Farr fabric from Thomas Lavin covers the cushions. Hovering above are a trio of pendants from Plug.



The homeowner had requested washed out, sun-bleached hues, but also touches of blue, her favorite color. "I like introducing color with materials rather than paint," notes Harlan, who brought the color in varying shades and amounts to nearly every room: sea-glass hues in the living room rug, navy blue fabric in the breakfast nook, and aquamarine tiles in the media room's wet bar.

Yet even with a palette tinged with ocean hues and a smattering of nautical touches (a light fixture inspired by a school of fish in the media room and a vintage surfboard hanging between the dining area

and kitchen—a gift from family), the house eschews expected beachy gestures. Rather, there are elements, primarily in the master suite, that lend a decidedly casual, bohemian feel. The bed's striped coverlet and an antique rug in the bathroom, for instance, add a global vibe. That casual free spirit also pervades the terrace, where, adjacent to the boardwalk, there is a blank wall that doubles as a projection screen. Under the stars and protected from the wind, it's the perfect place to unwind with family and friends. "It's anything but mundane," Harlan says. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime house." ■



Opposite: Harlan lined the Japanese-style soaking tub in the master bathroom with the same blue-glass Bisazza tile that he chose for the pool. A Toto sink and Dornbracht faucet, found at The Bath Company, match the clean lines of the Caesarstone-topped vanity. The rug is from Decorative Carpets.

Below: To maximize the size of the home's other rooms, Harlan devised a compact master bedroom. The bed, designed by the architect, features walnut-and-aluminum shelving and is upholstered in a Spinneybeck leather.

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